THE GOLDEN DAYS of '49

Golden Days.—Frontisoiece.

THE ISTHMUS

THE

GOLDEN DAYS OF '49

A TALE OF

THE CALIFORNIA DIGGINGS

BY

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR THE LAND OF GOLD.

CHAPTER II.

FROM HAVANA TO CHAGRES.

CHAPTER III.

UP THE CHAGRES RIVER.

CHAPTER IV.

TO PANAMA AND BEYOND.

CHAPTER V.

A GOLDEN SCHEME UNFOLDED.

CHAPTER VI.

SAN FRANCISCO IN THE SPRING OF '49.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM MID-DAY TO MIDNIGHT.

CHAPTER VIII.

UP THE SACRAMENTO RIVER.

CHAPTER IX.

AN OUTPOST OF CIVILIZATION.

CHAPTER X.

GOLD DIGGINGS AND DIGGERS.

CHAPTER XI.

BEYOND THE SETTLEMENTS.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUR ACES AND A ROYAL FLUSH.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIRM OF CONSPIRATORS.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BEWILDERING TRAIL.

THE GOLDEN DAYS OF '49.

CHAPTER I.

OFF FOR THE LAND OF GOLD.

A North River Scene.—On Board the *Falcon*.—Somehow and Somehow.—In the Lower Bay.—Introductions and Advice.—First Appearance of Wake-up Tedder and Silas Bodfish.—Below Hatteras.—Last Good-by to the States.

A GRAY chill in the air, with snow falling in a sullen, determined way, as though in defiance of the spring so near at hand, gave to New York, and especially to its harbor, a peculiarly cheerless and dreary aspect on a certain afternoon of March, 1849. The influence of the weather was felt in all directions; and those whose business compelled them to encounter the depressing atmosphere out of doors, hurried along with bent heads, exchanging only curt salutations with such acquaintances as they chanced to meet. Amid all the discomfort and gloom, there was, however, one notable scene of activity and cheery bustle. From one of the North River docks, a great side-wheel steamer was about to depart on a voyage that, judging from the excited throngs on her decks, in her saloons, or crowding the pier at which she lay, was of unusual interest and importance. And so it was at that time, for

the steamer was none other than the *Falcon*, of the newly-established Californian line, about to start for the Isthmus of Panama, with a list of passengers bound for the land of gold, that tested her accommodations to the utmost.

Last good-byes were being exchanged between husbands and wives, parents and sons, brothers and sisters; and it was evident that those about to be left behind regarded those who were going as little less than heroes.

Jesting remarks, beneath which was concealed the anguish of parting, as well as last charges of the most private and confidential nature, were passing between those on the pier and the passengers who thronged to the steamer's rail. Above all rose the hoarse roar of escaping steam, and the shouts of the stevedores engaged in getting aboard the mails, and last bits of belated baggage or cargo.

Some of the passengers had already donned what they considered to be the proper Californian costume, and now swaggered about the snow-covered decks under broad-brimmed felt hats, flannel shirts of vivid red, trousers stuffed into the tops of high boots, and with pistols or bowie-knives dangling from their belts. Others made themselves equally absurd by marching about with picks or shovels over their shoulders, as though they expected to discover gold at any moment and meant to be ready for it.

On all sides were scattered mining implements, patent gold-washers, force-pumps, rolls of blankets, and india-rubber contrivances of every description, from boots and mattresses to collapsable boats and bath-tubs. Shouts,

laughter, crying, the clink of glasses, cheers, and a hundred other sounds, swelled a bedlam of noise that was at once stimulating and deafening.

Amid all the surrounding confusion, leaning upon the rail at the stern of the steamer, stood one young man, lonely and alone, apparently paying no heed to what was going on about him. At the boom of the starting gun, and the splash of revolving paddle-wheels announcing that the moment of departure had arrived, he started, like one who had been dreaming, and made a movement toward the gangway as though resolved to be of those who were to remain behind. If such was his intention he was too late to carry it into effect; for the plank had been withdrawn, and already the steamer was in motion.

A parting cheer, accompanied by a volley of snowballs from some mischievous boys on an adjacent wharf, and the great ship had begun to plough her way over the leaden waters, through the snow-laden air, and beneath the cold, gray sky, toward the sunshine of the tropics.

The news of the wonderful discoveries of gold in California was still received with incredulity in the States, and the fever that was soon to send emigrants to that distant land by tens of thousands, was only just beginning to rage, when Linn Halstead decided that he was better fitted to be a gold-digger than anything else. With the natural impetuosity that so often led him into trouble, the young man had no sooner made up his mind to go, than he started for New York full of hope and confidence. There he was to arrange for the continuation of his journey to the country of gold. A first-class

passage to Chagres swallowed all but a few dollars of the modest sum that had been slowly accumulating in the village bank until his twenty-first birthday, which was just past. Now, nearly penniless, with but a slender outfit, and without an idea of how he should continue his journey beyond its first stage, he had really started for the land of his dreams. He came naturally by his roving disposition, for his mother's only and idolized brother had gone away at his age as he was now doing, and had never since been heard from. The sister had always longed to follow in her brother's footsteps, and when, at the time her child was five years old, she laid down the heavy burden of life as the wife of a New England village clergyman, it was with joyful anticipations of at last undertaking a long journey.

Linn had lavished all the wealth of his childish love upon his mother, and her memory was still his most cherished possession. His father had never sympathized with him in any of his pursuits or longings ; and when, after a year's trial of each, the young man had turned in disgust from the study of both law and medicine, he had been told that he might now mark out his own career, as the paternal aid could be extended no longer. Thus left to his own devices, he had chosen, and was now entering upon, that fascinating, but most uncertain of all pursuits, the search for gold.

While the younger Halstead had none of the dogged perseverance that is so certain of success in the end, and which was characteristic of his father, he did possess an amount of pride and confidence in himself that stood him

in almost as good stead. Upon the announcement of his choice of a career, his failure in it, as in others of his undertakings, had been so freely predicted by certain of his friends, that he had determined he would succeed this time if only to prove them false prophets. Still, he did not feel fairly committed to his uncertain enterprise until the steamer was really off, and there was no longer a chance for him to retreat from it. His heart had begun to fail him as he stood alone upon her deck, listening to the tender farewells of those about him, and he might have been tempted to abandon his plan at the last moment, had he been able to step ashore. When he discovered that this was no longer possible, his heart bounded with a great feeling of relief.

"All right," he said, half aloud, "I'm in for it now, and I'll get to California *somehow*, and I'll make a fortune out there *somehow*, or I'll never see New York City again."

With this the young man resolutely turned his back upon the shores he was leaving, and gazed steadfastly ahead through the falling snow, with more of determination in his face than it had ever before expressed.

As the *Falcon* crossed the lower bay, she met the inward-bound steamer *Crescent City*, just up from Chagres, with a full passenger list of home-returning Californians. One of these excited a wild enthusiasm among the outward-bound adventurers, by standing on top of the pilot-house, and significantly waving a well-filled leathern bag about his head. It was presumably filled with golden dust that he had wrested from Californian soil, and the

sight of it set the *Falcon* people to talking eagerly of the time when they, too, should be homeward bound, laden with the wealth of which they were in search. Each man felt assured that he was to be successful, but was doubtful as to the chances of his neighbor. A tall, lank Westerner, standing near Linn, remarked to his hearers in general:

"Burn me fer a stump, ef I don't come home jest thet way inside er six months. But I calkerlate," he added, reflectively, "thet my pile er dust won't be brung in no sich measly little grip as thet feller's satisfied with. No, siree! I want more'n thet, an' I'm ther kind of a hairpin thet'll get it too."

Linn thought these remarks were addressed to him; but not fancying the manner or appearance of the man, he answered, shortly: "I hope you may be successful."

"Successful! Wal, you kin bet I'm a-goin' to be successful," exclaimed the other, turning upon the young man scornfully. "Yer don't suppose I'm a-goin' clar away out to Californy fer nothin', do yer?"

"No," answered Linn, "I do not; but I suppose there are failures out there as well as successes, and some of us may meet with the one as well as the other."

"Failure!" echoed a loud voice close beside them. "I am surprised, young man, to hear you use the word in such a connection. It argues a lack of enterprise and pluck, and I predict that the man who makes use of the expression will return from the El Dorado of the West poorer, as well as wiser, than when he left the East."

Here the Westerner gave a chuckle, and attempted to

add his testimony; but waving him into silence, the speaker continued:

"For my part, I eliminated the word from my vocabulary before starting upon this golden quest. Henceforth it has no existence for S. B., which stands for Silas Bodfish, late principal of the Puffertown Academy, Puffertown, Conn., and ex-mayor of that municipality."

Here the speaker paused to wipe his brow with a large bandanna handkerchief, and those whom he addressed had an opportunity of studying his appearance.

He was middle-aged and pompous. What he lacked in height, he fully made up for in breadth, and his round, red face shone like the setting sun above the cloud-bank of an immense crimson necktie. He wore a tall hat, his chest was thrown out, his hands were usually clasped beneath the tails of a blue cutaway coat, he had the habit of raising himself on tip-toe when addressing a taller person, and he was so swelled and puffed out with the sense of his own importance, that he looked for all the world like a turkey-cock in full plumage.

As he finished speaking, the man from the West stretched forth a claw-like hand, that shot out from his coat-sleeve like the extension of a telescope, and exclaimed:

"Put it thar, stranger! Your sentiments is ez like mine as the two bows of an ox-yoke. I'm proud to make your acquaintance, an' between us I calkerlate we'll be able to graft some buds of true American grit inter the speerits of our young friend here, who appears so jubious as to his future prospecks of success. Tedder's my

name, Wake-up Tedder, an' I'm from the State of Missouri, whar I've follered tannin' fer a trade."

Curiously enough these two men, so diverse in appearance and the nature of their former pursuits, seemed to take a fancy to each other, and from that time until the end of the voyage, they were generally to be found together, always agreeing with each other, and always prepared to support each other in argument against any opinion or question that might be raised within their hearing.

Although the *Falcon* was crowded beyond her capacity, and the weather for the first two days out from New York was cold, wet, and stormy, the high hopes of her passengers, and their all-absorbing topic of thought and conversation, kept them from being as miserable as they might have been. Once past Hatteras, that bugbear of timid sailors, they felt that they were fairly and safely started on their long journey, and rejoiced accordingly.

On the fourth day out, the steamer lay to off Charleston, to take aboard a mail and a few more passengers, who looked forlorn and miserable enough after a night of pitching and weary waiting in the tug that had brought them down from the city. As the sun set that evening, Tybee Light, at the mouth of the Savannah River, streamed out broad and red across the dark waters.

The next morning found them abreast of St. Augustine, in Florida. All that day they skirted the low, unbroken coast, keeping in close to the beach to escape the powerful current of the Gulf Stream. Here the passengers revelled in the almost tropical warmth of the weather,

and gazed longingly at the forests of mingled pine and palm that approached the sea so closely as almost to be wet with its spray. That evening they passed the tall, white lighthouse on Cape Florida, the most southerly on the mainland of the United States. The fact that this was the last bit of his own country he should see for many days, impressed Linn with the adventurous sensations of an explorer. It is always a wonderful thing for the untravelled to leave their native land for the first time, and the young man thoroughly enjoyed the feeling.

CHAPTER II.

FROM HAVANA TO CHAGRES.

Sights of Havana Harbor.—Across the Caribbean Sea.—Arrival at Chagres.—A Filthy Town.—Engaging Canoes.—Angry Americans and Indifferent Natives.—Homeward-bound Californians.—Off at Last.—An Unexpected Passenger.

By the following noon, after steaming for some time within sight of the bold northern coast of Cuba, the *Falcon* rounded in under the frowning walls of Moro Castle, rising black and gloomy above their wave-worn cliffs, and entered, through a narrow passage, into the beautiful land-locked harbor of Havana. Here, although she was to remain only long enough for a transfer of mails, and her passengers were not allowed to land, they were immensely interested in the novel scene outspread before them.

As they were anchored near the head of the harbor, the brown, blue, ochre, and pink-tinted walls, the red-tiled roofs, and square towers of the city, bounded their view on the west; while on the opposite hand rose the green palm-topped terraces of Regoles, a suburb dotted with low white-walled country houses, and the one in which the Sunday bull-fights take place. The waters of the harbor were alive with the picturesque small boats that continually ply between the steamers at the anchorage and the *machina* or landing-place. Each of these had in the stern a low canvas roof, stretched tightly over an

arched framework, after the fashion of wagon-covers on the Western plains. This, while affording the passenger protection against sun and rain, does not interfere with his view, nor with the free passage of refreshing breezes. For several hours scores of these boats were employed near the *Falcon* in transferring soldiers from a newly-arrived Spanish troop-ship, to the beach, beneath the long line of cream-colored buildings that, behind high walls, extend back from the Moro, and are used as barracks and storehouses.

Captain Hartstein pointed out the most conspicuous objects of interest to his passengers; but of all the information he gave them, nothing so impressed Linn as the fact that the ashes of Christopher Columbus rested beneath the tall towers of the Cathedral of San Francisco, which was the most notable building to be seen from the steamer's deck. Everything that he saw was so delightfully novel to the young man, that he would have gladly remained where they were much longer; but most of his fellow-passengers were so impatient to reach their journey's end, that they hailed with joy the signal for departure, and watched without regret the disappearance of the Moro walls, as they faded from sight with the setting sun.

The run across the Caribbean Sea was pleasant but uneventful; and, on the third day after leaving Havana, the dim peaks of the Darien Andes were sighted, and the first stage of their long journey drew toward its close. For fifty miles they skirted the coast, within sight of its hills and valleys, its feathery palms and stretches of

glistening beach. Then the *Falcon's* anchor was dropped in the edge of the shoal water, about two miles outside the mouth of the Chagres River.

Now ensued a scene of even greater confusion and anxiety than had attended the departure of the steamer from New York. There the adventurers had known what to expect, at least for the first stage of their journey. Here its hardships were to begin, and the immediate as well as the distant future was full of uncertainties. The decks were piled high with personal belongings, and each man gathered his own effects as closely as possible about him, while casting suspicious glances at his neighbors to see if in any way they were about to get ahead of him.

Most of them had joined others in forming small companies of three or four, for the trip up the river. There was a leader chosen for each of these, and when a large dug-out, manned by natives, came off from the shore, these leaders endeavored by the most vociferous yelling and liberal inducements, to engage agents who would secure river canoes in the village, and have them in readiness when the landing should be effected.

Somewhat to their surprise, Linn, and a young carpenter from New Jersey named Moore, who had been his room-mate on the steamer, were invited to join company with Messrs. Bodfish and Tedder. Not knowing what better to do they had accepted the offer, and now Wake-up Tedder's voice was to be heard high above all others, demanding the attention of an ebony agent who should secure, at the lowest rates, the best canoe in

Chagres, for the conveyance of his company to Gorgona. In his eagerness he tossed a five-dollar gold piece to the grinning negro whose services he finally succeeded in engaging, and who promised by all the saints in the calendar that the *cabelleros* should find a canoe awaiting them, and should not be delayed a moment after landing.

"Thar!" exclaimed the perspiring, but self-satisfied Tedder, as he elbowed his way back through the crowd that thronged the rail, to where his company awaited the result of his negotiations. "I reckeon we're fixed all right. Thar's nothing like spending a little ready cash among such fellers as these to make 'em do what you want. I think as much of a dollar as anybody, but I don't mind spending it whar it'll do good."

It is easy to spend other people's money, and as the man from Missouri immediately levied two dollars apiece from each member of his company, declaring that he had found it necessary to expend that amount in securing a canoe, it was evident that his was a thrifty nature.

Soon after the transaction of this business, the *Falcon's* four hundred passengers were landed by the steamer's boats just inside the mouth of the river in shoal water, through which they waded to the beach in front of the collection of cane huts that formed the village of Chagres.

Probably a more filthy, pestilential place than this same village of Chagres did not at that time exist on the American continent. It was located on both sides of the river, and consisted, for the most part, of wretched little huts, each containing but a single room, and each of which was the centre of an inconceivable mass of dirt and

filth. Gaunt hogs, and a legion of mangy curs, prowled in every direction, and were apparently as welcome within the huts as outside of them. On the roofs were perched flocks of buzzards and carrion crows. These gazed in heavy-eyed wonder at the irruption of flannel-shirted strangers who had so rudely disturbed their operations among the filth piles.

Yellow fever, and the Chagres fever which was to be equally dreaded by the unacclimated, were only laughed at by the half-naked natives who dwelt amid these abominations; but the cholera, which had recently made its appearance on the Isthmus, was to them the terror of terrors. Their sole method of dealing with the plague was to visit the ruinous old Castle of San Lorenzo, that crowned a steep bluff on the eastern side of the river's mouth, and procure quantities of the damaged powder that still remained in its old magazine. This they spread about the streets of the village and fired. It burned slowly and emitted dense clouds of sulphurous smoke; but whether it did any other good than the destroying of myriads of fleas, is an open question.

Choked by the fumes of this propitiatory incense, the unhappy passengers were also beset by swarms of natives, who deafened them with their cries of "*Canoa! Canoa! A Cruces, a Gorgona!*" and maintained an incessant demand for pesos or reales as payment in advance for the services they proposed to render. Bargains made through the individuals who had visited the steamer were now found to be utterly ignored, nor was one of the slippery agents to be discovered amid the throng.

What with the dread of the cholera, their anxiety to push ahead, and the fear of in some way being left behind, a sort of a panic seized the emigrants, and they began to offer the most exorbitant prices for transportation up the river. Their excitement was increased by the arrival of a fleet of boats from Gorgona, bringing the first of a steamer load of returning Californians, who had engaged passage to New York by the *Falcon.* These brought the news that the *Oregon,* which they had left at Panama, was to sail for San Francisco as soon as she received the mails, and that those intending to go by her had better hurry up or they would be left. They also brought doleful accounts of the ravages of the cholera in Panama.

Most of these homeward-bound new comers exhibited gold in dust, scales, or nuggets, and one of them was the proud possessor of a solid lump weighing very nearly five pounds. The exhibition of this wealth was accompanied by the assurance that there was plenty more still to be had where it came from, but that thousands of miners were flocking to the diggings from all parts of the world. All this, of course, increased the impatience of the outward-bound adventurers to reach the wonderland before it should be despoiled of its treasure.

In Chagres this influx of gold caused monte-tables, and other gambling lay-outs, to spring up as though by magic on all sides, and a number of the homeward-bound miners seized eagerly upon this means for passing the time and began to gamble recklessly. Several of them loudly announced their intention of either doubling their piles or

dropping what they had got right there. They seemed possessed with the idea of showing the greenhorns from the States how little they valued the yellow dust, to obtain which they had risked their lives; and, with a ruinous disregard of consequences, they gambled it away, or spent it lavishly in the vile drinking dens that were almost the only shops to be found in the place.

Meanwhile those who were outward bound gathered in clamorous throngs about a long barn-like establishment, belonging to a Spaniard named Ramos, who seemed to own most of the canoes on the river, or at least to be the sole agent through whom they could be procured. Here prices were agreed upon and bargains made, only to be immediately ignored by the avaricious natives, who demanded more each time an apparent agreement was reached.

At last the patience of the Americans became utterly exhausted. Pistols were drawn, a few harmless shots were fired, and cries of "Burn the old rascal! Tear down his shanty! Annex the whole Isthmus! Take possession of the canoes!" etc., were heard on all sides. A rush was made to the beach, and several of the boats drawn up in a long line upon it were seized and pushed off into the river.

These demonstrations so frightened the natives that they quickly came to terms, and shortly before sunset Linn Halstead and his companions found themselves seated in a trim-looking craft, in the stern of which was a palm-thatched bungo or shelter from the weather, similar to those they had seen on the boats in Havana har-

Golden Days.—Pages 16-17.

JGH RAPIDS

bor. The canoe was manned by three men, one of whom, called the patrone, sat in the stern sheets, where he passed his time in smoking corn-husk cigaritos, and swearing in bad Spanish at his men. They were coal-black natives, naked except for their breech-clouts, who wielded broad-bladed paddles with a most encouraging display of dexterity and strength. For passage in this craft to Gorgona, the head of dry season navigation, from which point they would take a trail across the mountains to Panama, twenty-four miles farther on, the members of Tedder's company had agreed to pay ten dollars apiece. This was exactly half the sum of money still remaining in Linn's purse, and what he was to do upon reaching Panama he had not the least idea. He had learned that the fare from that point to San Francisco was three hundred dollars; but it might have been a thousand so far as his ability to pay it was concerned. Still, he was happy at having got thus far on his way in safety, and had not yet lost his confidence that he would yet pull through all right *somehow*.

Just as the canoe, which was one of the very last to leave, had been pushed off from shore and headed up the river, a long-legged, long-bearded individual rushed down to the bank, shouting:

"Hello, there! Hold on. Take me aboard! I'll work my passage and pay for it too!"

Tedder and Bodfish wanted to go ahead, and pay no attention to the stranger; but Linn, recognizing him as one of the returned Californians who had come down the river that day, and thinking that his experience might be

useful to them, was in favor of letting him join their party. Moore was also of this opinion, and as Celestino, the patrone, was more than willing to have an additional paying passenger, the canoe was put back, and the stranger sprang aboard.

His name was Thurston; but his companions of the diggings had nicknamed him "Thirsty," by which designation he had become known to half the mining camps of the gold region. Having, after months of combined success and reckless extravagance, suddenly accumulated several thousand dollars by a lucky strike in Mormon Gulch, he had decided to return to the States to spend his wealth. In spite of this laudable intention, the greater part of it had been thrown away in the gaudy gambling houses of San Francisco, more had followed in the similar establishments of Panama, and at Chagres he had just been relieved of what had remained.

"And a blamed lucky thing it is for me, too," he said, as he related this experience to his new-found friends. "It was only five hundred, anyway, and not worth packing to New York. Now I'm free to go back for another strike, and this time you can bet your sweet lives the sharps won't get a smell of it. I tell you, gentle*men*, there's nothing like corralling a bit of experience, even if you do lose your ante in catching onto it."

Thurston had sold his first-class ticket to New York for sufficient money to purchase a steerage passage back to San Francisco, and now he began to retrace his tedious journey as cheerfully and light-heartedly, as though all its trials were unknown, and he were merely on a pleasure trip.

Having received this unexpected passenger, and Celestino having lighted a fresh cigarito, the canoe was again headed up the river. In a few minutes a bend in its course had hidden Chagres from view, and as the last rays of the setting sun faded from the tips of the tallest palms, our adventurers were buried in the black shadows of the dense forest that lined the banks on either side.

CHAPTER III.

UP THE CHAGRES RIVER.

Canoeing in the Tropics.—Gatun.—A Fandango and its Results.—A Night Journey.—Linn Receives an Offer of Partnership.—La Colera.—Moore's Sufferings.—Deserted at San Pablo.—Making a Will.—Death and Burial on the Isthmus.

WITHIN an hour after the canoe had left Chagres, with its clamor of sound, its pestilential odors, and its disgusting sights, for the solemn silence and the purer air of the river, the full moon arose, converting its watery pathway into a scene of enchantment. From the dense masses of foliage lining the banks, came the powerful scents of night-blooming tropical flowers. From the same forest depths came also weird cries and noises produced by strange birds, reptiles, and insects. On the water, broad spaces of silver sheen were alternated with blackest shadows, across which flitted innumerable fireflies of wonderful brilliancy. Even the untiring tongues of Tedder and Bodfish were silenced by the magic spell of the hour, and they sat quietly smoking, the one a cigar, and the other a corn-cob pipe. The plaintive songs, to which the native boatmen kept time with their paddles, fitted the time and scene so perfectly that they only served to intensify the wonderful effect.

The new passenger, true to his promise of working his way, had taken a paddle, which he now plied with skilful

strokes that rivalled the lusty efforts of the natives, and promised to materially shorten the time of their journey. Moore, who was extravagantly fond of fruit, had revelled in the many strange varieties found in Chagres, and having eaten a quantity there, had also laid in a supply of mangoes, sapotes, bananas, and cocoanuts for the journey up the river. From these he now proceeded to make a hearty supper, despite the warning of Celestino, that they were all very bad to eat at night.

Linn, tired out with the novel excitement of the day, became very drowsy, and creeping under the thatched roof of the bungo soon fell into a deep sleep. From it he was awakened an hour or two later, by a barking of dogs, the shrill cries of children, a beating of drums, and a confusion of shoutings and laughter. These denoted their near approach to Gatun, ten miles from Chagres, where they were to obtain supper if they could, and rest for a few hours.

The canoe was beached amid a number of similar craft that had preceded it, and climbing the bank to the village, our travellers found themselves amid a most extraordinary scene, and one without a parallel beyond the limits of the Isthmus during the first rush of gold-seekers to California. The little Indian settlement, of a score or so of huts, was occupied by several hundred Americans and other foreigners, who were eating, drinking, dancing, gambling, quarrelling, sleeping, or wandering restlessly to and fro. Supper-tables, monte-tables, and improvised bars were everywhere to be seen, in the open air or under hastily erected roofs of thatch, and each was

surrounded by an excited, hungry, or thirsty crowd of men. At one end of the village a fandango was in progress, partly within a brilliantly lighted hut somewhat larger than its neighbors, but mostly out of doors. The music for dancing was beaten from a couple of native drums, which kept time to a monotonous accompaniment of ña, ña, ña, chanted untiringly by a dozen old women, who were seated on the ground, just beyond the circle of dancers.

Left to their own resources our friends would, perhaps, have fared badly so far as supper was concerned. Thurston, however, who had been there before, led them to a hut with some pretensions to neatness, on the outskirts of the village, where, upon the payment of a dollar apiece in advance, they obtained a coarse but plentiful meal. It consisted of tortillas, or thin cakes baked as they were wanted upon the flat surface of heated stones, fried pork, and coffee. In addition to these Moore drank liberally of aguadiente, a fiery native liquor which he claimed would ward off the ill effects of the night chill on the river. He soon became so excited by this, that he declared his intention of attending the fandango, and of showing the "greasers" a thing or two about dancing.

As the young man started toward the scene of festivity his companions followed him, partly to see the fun, and partly because they had nothing better to do. On the way Thurston dropped behind, attracted by the, to him, irresistible influence of a monte-table. His absence was not noticed by the others; for, as they walked, the pompous Bodfish and shrill-voiced Tedder dilated in loud

tones upon the evils of intemperance, while Linn tried to restrain Moore, who was becoming very angry at their ill-timed remarks. Fortunately as they reached the place of the fandango his attention was attracted by the sight of a young Spaniard, who was performing a most extravagant dance amid a circle of admiring and applauding spectators. Their appreciation of his skill and endurance was evidenced by the number of hats with which they crowned him, until his antics were performed beneath a small tower of sombreros.

In his partially inebriated condition Moore seemed to regard this man's dancing as a direct challenge to himself. After watching him for a few minutes he suddenly broke from Linn's grasp, and, dashing into the open space, also began to dance with such furious energy as to win a perfect storm of applause and cheers from the delighted spectators. The young Spaniard redoubled his efforts, though his panting breath showed him to be nearly exhausted, and for five minutes or so the two men danced at each other as though their efforts were but preliminary to a more desperate struggle for supremacy. At length, the Spaniard, feeling that he could hold out no longer, suddenly advanced his foot and tripped his rival so deftly, that the latter fell heavily, and lay motionless on the hard ground.

Linn sprang to the side of the fallen man, Tedder made a grab at the young Spaniard, and Bodfish yelled "Police!" at the top of his voice. Half a dozen natives seized Tedder as he was about to chastise his prisoner, and compelled him to let him go. The Missourian flung them

right and left like so many jack-straws, and his long arms rose and fell with the loose-jointed energy of flails above a threshing-floor, but in spite of his efforts the Spaniard succeeded in escaping to the forest shadows beyond the village and was seen no more.

Natives and Americans now swarmed to the spot, pistols and knives were drawn, a few shots were fired, and war seemed imminent. Thurston and Celestino came running from opposite directions, and both being well accustomed to similar scenes comprehended the state of affairs upon the instant. With Linn's aid they succeeded in getting the still unconscious Moore, the belligerent Tedder, and the much-frightened Bodfish down to the canoe. Here the boatmen, who were asleep under the bungo, were routed out, and in a few minutes Gatun had been left behind. Its sounds of revelry and strife became fainter and fainter, until they were lost altogether in the deep nocturnal silence that brooded over the river.

Moore was soon restored to consciousness by a liberal application of river water, but seemed still dazed and not to comprehend what was said to him. He soon fell into a heavy sleep that lasted the rest of the night. For some time Tedder and Bodfish, having described at length the punishment they would have inflicted upon the natives of Gatun had they been allowed to carry out their programme, finally joined Moore in the narrow space beneath the thatched roof, where they too soon gave ample proof of being asleep. As there was no room for Linn under the shelter, he was forced to remain outside in company with Thurston.

The young man soon discovered that he had no reason to regret this necessity ; for, despite his uncouth appearance and rough language garnished with the picturesque slang of the diggings, the miner proved to be possessed of a varied experience, and a mind filled with quaint conceits as well as stored with interesting information. The more Linn talked to the man the more he liked him. He soon found himself disclosing his most cherished plans and hopes to this stranger, and talking as freely to him as though they were the friends of years. The other in turn gave him many useful hints as to the state of affairs in San Francisco, and at the diggings. So engrossed were they in conversation, that before they were aware of it the night had passed, and the morning light was stealing over the surface of the mist-shrouded river. As he finally noticed this, Thurston interrupted himself in the middle of the story of how Murderer's Bar received its name, and said :

"Look here, Halstead, I believe you're a white man, and I like the color in your pan. S'posin' you and me stake out a claim together ?"

"What ?" asked Linn, not at all comprehending the other's meaning.

"S'posin' you and me go into pardnership. I've got some experience, and you seem to have a level head and plenty of sand. At the same time I take it that neither of us is at all troubled by the weight of his pile. I don't mind telling you that I scooped a few ounces from them sharps in Gatun last night, and it's the first bit of luck I've had since I lit out from the diggings. Now, I want

you to take this and keep it for me, paying all running expenses out of it, and never letting me see the color of it, even if I was to call for it with a gun in my hand, which I ain't likely to do."

"But how do you know I'm honest, and won't spend your money?" asked Linn.

"Well, I've kinder sized you up, and believe you'd deal a square hand; but even if you should turn out to be a galoot, and mosey with the outfit, I'd be willing to let it go for the sake of the experience. That's the bulliest kind of a hand to draw to, and I'd rather own the experience of some men I know than to have the best claim in Mormon Gulch entered in the name of Thirsty Thurston. But I'm catching onto it, and some day maybe you'll be surprised to find out the size of my pile of experience. Now what do you say? Are you willing to work in cahoots with yours truly, until one or the other of us gets tired of the pardnership?"

"Yes, I believe I am," replied Linn, who divined rather than understood the meaning of what the other said; "but—"

"Yes, you said, Si Señor, and no buts need apply!" exclaimed Thurston, joyfully. "Shake, pard," he added, extending a rough, hairy paw, that Linn grasped heartily.

"Now that I've froze onto a white man who doesn't know a monte lay-out from a checker-board, and shan't never tumble to the difference if I can help it, the sharps may whistle for all they'll make out of Thirsty Thurston. Why, pard, you're a bank with a fireproof vault and a dog let loose at night, and I'm a wealthy galoot who's

been looking for just such a place of safety for my dinero. Here, take it and lock it up, and don't accept no checks onless they's certified."

With this he handed Linn the dirty, well-worn buckskin bag that contained all his worldly wealth, and apparently received in return a heart as light as his own pockets. His joy over his successful stroke of business attempted to break forth in song; but as his voice was no more musical than a crow's, it ended in a loud hurrah instead. This aroused Tedder and Bodfish, who crept sleepily out of the bungo to demand what was the matter.

"Nothing, except that we're close by the rancheria of Dos Hermanos, where we're going to corral some grub," was the answer with which they were compelled to be satisfied.

At Dos Hermanos the party got a miserable breakfast of muddy coffee, sodden biscuit, and fat pork, which was little better than starvation, but for which they were charged the invariable one dollar apiece. Moore refused to touch it, and ate some of his fruit instead. The poor fellow still showed traces of his hard experience of the night before, and during the day he began to complain of severe internal pains. To relieve these he drank several large doses of brandy, and the still more fiery aguadiente. These only increased the difficulty, and by sunset, when they reached the hamlet of Peña Blanca, where they were to pass the night, his sufferings were intense. He now became seriously alarmed, and begged of his companions to do something for his relief.

Bodfish and Tedder took advantage of the occasion to

continue their remarks upon the vice of intemperance. They went so far as to tell the poor fellow that his sufferings were well deserved, and that the best thing for him to do was to endure them in silence, and accept them as a much-needed lesson.

Finally the big Californian could stand this no longer; and, planting himself squarely in front of the sick man's tormentors, he expressed his views in regard to the situation very plainly, though in language more picturesque than elegant. His hearers, however, fully understood his meaning, and were thoroughly cowed into silence by the force of his remarks.

Both Linn and Thurston did everything possible for the sick man during that night of discomfort. They were crowded into a single room in the wretched hut called by courtesy a hotel; and, from the moment they lay down in the narrow bunks assigned them, they were tormented by incredible swarms of fleas and other vermin. The sufferer groaned and tossed all night, and in the morning he was so weak that it was found necessary to carry him to the canoe. All that day he lay moaning in agony beneath the shelter of the bungo, evidently growing worse each moment.

The river had now become so swift and shallow that the crew were frequently obliged to get overboard and drag the canoe up long reaches of tumultuous rapids. At other times they stemmed the current by means of poles, or by running close in under the bank and pulling along from one cable-like vine to another, as they overhung the water from limbs of forest trees. Although this was the

dry season they were visited that day by a series of terrific thunder-storms, each of which left everything soaked and steaming in the hot sun that blazed out with redoubled intensity as soon as it had passed. These deluges drew from Thurston the remark that the two seasons of that country appeared to be a wet season, and a blamed wet season.

This weather affected the sick man so unfavorably, that he began to have periods of delirium, during which he raved of gold-fields, and the riches that were soon to be his. Long before this the boatmen had whispered ominously of *la colera*, and begun to cast apprehensive glances toward him. In spite of the showers Bodfish and Tedder vacated the bungo, and remained as far from it as they could get. The energies and strength of the big Californian were wholly devoted to forcing the canoe as speedily as possible toward Gorgona, where it was hoped medical aid might be obtained. Linn was therefore left as sole nurse of the sufferer, and, though he could do but little for him, his mere presence was gratefully appreciated by Moore during his lucid moments.

At length, when Gorgona was still several miles distant, they came in sight of the large ranch and comfortable-looking adobe house of the Padre Dutaris, of San Pablo, and Celestino suggested that if anybody could relieve the sufferings of the young Americano it would be the good priest. Bodfish and Tedder seized eagerly upon this idea, and proposed to go ashore, with Celestino to act as interpreter, and interview the padre. The others agreeing to this, the canoe was beached, and, climbing the

steep bank, these three disappeared in the direction of the hacienda. In a few minutes they returned, saying that the good man had readily consented to come to their aid, but must first prepare a powerful medicine which would doubtless relieve their friend. They advised Linn and Thurston to go up to the house and accompany him back, assuring them that this was the most beautiful and interesting place to be seen on the whole Isthmus.

Suspecting nothing, and glad of a chance to stretch his legs and see something of the country, Linn accepted the suggestion, and at once started off followed by the Californian. They did not meet the padre, and going to the house learned to their surprise that he was away from home.

Hurrying back to demand an explanation from their companions, they found, to their amazement, that the canoe had disappeared, and also discovered poor Moore lying unconscious on the beach, where it had been drawn up but a few minutes before.

The indignation of the two men, when they realized the nature of this cowardly desertion, and the trick by which it had been accomplished, knew no bounds.

"The coyotes!" hissed the Californian, through his clenched teeth, "shooting would be too good for them, and if ever I meet up with them again —; but never mind," he added, in an altered tone, "we've got something else to think of just now. Experience is experience, and we've struck it in nuggets. Let's see what we can do for our sick friend here. It looks to me as if the poor fellow was going to pass in his chips."

Moore did not die then and there, but he did, just at daylight of the second day after, in the miserable little outbuilding which was the only place the cowardly natives would permit him to occupy. Here he was made as comfortable as possible on a bed of corn-husks, and here Linn and his big-hearted partner did everything in their power to soothe the agony of his last moments.

Shortly before he died the intolerable pain left him, and, opening his eyes, he spoke feebly to the young man who watched beside him saying :

" You've been good to me, Halstead, better than I deserved. I've been a fool, and I'm paying for it. Now it's all over. I want you to have my ticket and tools, and what little money I've got left. And I want you to write to—to—"

The voice had been growing fainter and weaker, until now it sank into an indistinguishable whisper. In another moment the young gold-seeker had passed away, and one more name was added to the long list of those who started for, but never reached, the land of their dreams.

This incident of the journey was a terrible shock to Linn, and he was more than thankful for the cheering presence of Thirsty Thurston, who skilfully and tenderly performed the last sad offices for their dead companion. They buried him in the evening, at the foot of a tall palm, to the trunk of which they nailed a bit of board inscribed with his name. Alone and unaided they laid him in his grave ; for the natives so dreaded the cholera that

they would have nothing to do with him or them. Even the padre made his religion the excuse for refusing to read a burial service over the heretic. So it devolved upon Linn Halstead to kneel beside the open grave, and offer a short but fervent prayer, while the big Californian stood beside him with uncovered and reverent head.

In the dead man's pocketbook, of which Linn took charge according to the verbal legacy made with the young carpenter's latest breath, they found a first-class ticket, good on any Pacific mail steamship between Panama and San Francisco, and about fifty dollars in money. This was all. There were no letters, no cards, nothing from which they could discover the address of his friends. They hoped they might find one in his tool-chest, that with their own baggage had been carried off in the canoe; but when they finally recovered it they found only Moore's name painted on the inside of the lid. So no word could be sent back concerning the fate of the young adventurer. To this day his friends, like those of thousands whose unmarked graves dot the Isthmus and the Californian hill-sides, are uncertain as to his fate, and perhaps cherish lingering hopes that he may yet return to them.

CHAPTER IV.

TO PANAMA AND BEYOND.

Gorgona.—The Patrone's Demand.—Before the Alcalde.—Justice on the Isthmus.—Over the Darien Andes.—Panama.—Thirsty's Game of Keno.—The Island of Taboga.—Up the Pacific Coast.—Two Important Incidents.—Approaching the Golden Gate.

HAVING thus, like the true-hearted men they were, fulfilled their duty toward their late travelling companion, Halstead and Thurston resumed their interrupted journey at daylight the following morning, employing a native to guide them through the forest to Gorgona.

Shortly before reaching it they came to one of the camps of American engineers who were engaged in a survey for the Panama railroad. A few years later this great work was finished, and the once weary journey of four or five days across the Isthmus, became but a pleasant trip of less than the same number of hours. They were kindly received by the engineers, and invited to dine with them, an invitation they were only too glad to accept.

Soon after leaving this camp, they entered Gorgona (place of rocks), which, after all the hardships of their tedious journey, they could hardly believe was less than fifty miles from Chagres by the river, and only about twenty in an air line. The town contained about two

hundred native huts, a sprinkling of tents, and a few adobe houses with some pretensions to comfort.

At one of these, bearing the high-sounding title of "Hôtel Française," they met their runaway boatman, Celestino. With the impudence characteristic of the Darien natives of that day, he faced them boldly, and not only demanded payment of their passage-money from Chagres, as well as that of poor Moore, but also that Linn should pay for Bodfish and Tedder. It seemed that these worthies had hurried on to Panama, after telling Celestino that Linn had all the money of the party, and would foot the bills upon his arrival. As security for these, the patrone held Linn's and Thurston's baggage, as well as Moore's tool-chest.

"It's a perfect outrage!" exclaimed Linn, when this was explained to him.

"We'll see what the alcalde thinks about it," said Thurston.

The office of the alcalde, or chief magistrate of Gorgona, was the bar-room over which he presided, and thither they now hurried, followed by a noisy throng of natives.

From behind his bar the alcalde listened patiently to their complaints, and to Celestino's version of the affair. Then, after clearing his brain by taking a glass full of his own aguadiente, he rendered his decision. It was that, so long as Celestino must be paid somehow, and there was no chance of overtaking the two passengers who had gone on to Panama, it naturally rested with those who remained to foot the entire bill. He further

ordered that they should pay the costs of the trial, which he fixed at ten dollars. For having deserted three of his passengers, and thus failing to fulfil his contract with them, he ordered that Celestino should treat all the spectators of the trial, who now crowded the court-room to its utmost capacity, and should, in addition to this penalty, pass the next four hours in the public stocks.

As treating the spectators of a trial was an unvarying feature of this alcalde's decisions, his bar-room was always well filled upon such occasions, and in the present instance the wisdom of his judgment was acknowledged by a general shout of approval.

There was, of course, no chance for appeal from this ruling. Linn was compelled to pay fifty dollars to Celestino, and ten more to the alcalde; while, with the smiling face of a successful litigant, the yellow-skinned boatman gracefully invited all present to drink with him. Tossing off a glass of aguadiente, bowing to the alcalde, and lighting a cigarito, he then walked out to where the stocks were standing, adjusted them to his ankles, and settled himself comfortably for a four hours' nap.

Thus did the alcalde of Gorgona administer popular justice, and secure his own reward for so doing in the days of '49.

Having thus secured their baggage, and paid dearly for the usual experience of those who go to law, our travellers were more than anxious to leave Gorgona and push on to Panama. The distance between the two places is twenty-four miles, and from motives of economy,

Linn would have made the journey on foot. Thurston, however, advised the hiring of mules to carry both them and their effects. He said:

"I've sampled that road twice already, and I know every gulch in it. We may get through in one day with mules, but it would take us two on foot. My experience is that the best is always the cheapest in the long run, and in this case the best is the quickest. The longer we stay on this blamed Isthmus the closer they'll skin us. Our chance of catching the *Oregon* is slim enough now, and if we walk she'll probably be gone before we make Panama. Then where'd we be?"

To engage mules in Gorgona, especially since the passing of the *Falcon's* people, was as difficult as the securing of canoes in Chagres; and the remainder of the day was spent in concluding a bargain with the owner of three of these animals. It was finally agreed that, for thirty dollars, these mules should carry them and their baggage to Panama, and that they should start at sunrise.

The trail across the narrow plain to the mountains surrounding Gorgona was already well occupied when Linn and his companion left that place on the following morning. Long trains of pack-horses, mules, and bulls, in which each animal was made fast to the tail of the one in advance, were urged forward by gaudily-dressed vaqueros. Californian emigrants on foot and on horseback, and scores of nearly naked *cargadores*, or native porters, bending beneath heavy burdens, formed a decidedly mixed company, and all were bound in the same direction. So great was the heat of the newly risen sun, even

at that early hour, that it was pleasant to leave the plain, and plunge into the dense forest shade of the foot-hills, though the way at once became more toilsome.

Progress was soon resolved into climb, scramble, and plunge. Thousands of mules, and other heavily-laden animals, each planting his feet exactly in the footsteps of his predecessors, had worn deep holes in the clay of the narrow trail. A heavy shower during the night had filled these with mud and water, in which the animals ridden by our friends now slipped and floundered up to their saddle-girths.

As they advanced deeper into the mountains, they occasionally traversed trails that were mere shelves on the sides of steep declivities. Here the meeting of two mule-trains, or even of two single animals, would have been disastrous. There was no chance for retreat, and in such cases a man on foot could only pass an animal by crawling over its back. Therefore at each end of these dangerous places were hung ox-horns, upon which warning blasts must be sounded before the passage was attempted.

Now the way led down hill-sides so steep that the mules, with extended fore-feet, could only slide on their haunches to the bottom. This was often a morass, through which the laden beasts floundered, and in which they sometimes became mired beyond extrication. The entire route was lined with cleanly-picked bones and decaying carcases of animals that, worn out with incessant toil, had been shoved from the shelf-like ledges, pitched headlong down the declivities, or stalled in these bog-holes. It was also strewn with broken packages, boxes,

trunks, and fragments of machinery, that had come to grief through some of the accidents that were constantly happening.

At one point a tinkling bell, and loud shoutings, warned our travellers of an approaching train, and they had only time to squeeze their own animals to one side of the narrow trail before it appeared. First came a white mare with the bell they had heard attached to her neck, and following her were twenty mules, gayly caparisoned with jingling harness, and loaded with bars of yellow gold, fresh from the mines of Peru. A dozen native soldiers armed with rusty muskets, and looking as though it would not be a difficult matter for any able-bodied white man to put them to flight, lazily followed the treasure train, and were presumably its guard.

So on and on, through the unbroken forest, whose only sounds were the chattering of monkeys and the screaming of parrots, struggling through swamps and thickets, fording rushing torrents, slipping, rolling, plunging, scrambling, until poor Linn felt that every bone in his body must be dislocated, the toilsome journey was pursued until nightfall. It was after dark when their trail became so much broader, smoother, and straighter, that Thurston declared they had at last struck the old paved road, and were within a short distance of Panama. The jaded animals were urged on by stick and spur, to make one more effort, and Linn, feeling as though he had been pounded like a tough beefsteak, tried to straighten himself in his saddle, as he scented a whiff of salt air that he knew must come from the Pacific.

Soon they began to see a twinkling light here and there, and to pass huts that gave place to larger buildings and extensive ruins. Then came a plaza and a vast edifice that Thurston said was a church. Passing under a massive gateway, they entered the narrow streets of Panama, and, after threading several of them, clattered up to the Hotel Americano.

It was of course full; but, like a street-car, it had room for one more if you insisted upon being that one, and Thirsty Thurston did insist so strenuously, and to such purpose, that not only were they taken in and provided with supper, but they were shown to a room that had but four other occupants.

Now that the excitement of the journey was over, Linn felt that he did not care for anything in the world but to lie down and rest his aching bones. He had never been so tired and lame in his life. He was discouraged and anxious, too, for the first news they heard in the city was that the *Oregon* had sailed the day before. Now there might not be another steamer for a month, and how were they to live in that city of exorbitant prices for that length of time? Of course Tedder and Bodfish had gone, so there was no chance of recovering anything from them. With an aching body and sorrowful reflections, the young man crawled to the corner allotted him as soon as they had finished supper, spread his blanket on the floor, and lay down to try and forget his troubles in sleep.

He was angry at being shaken into wakefulness a few hours later, and could not, for some time, comprehend what was being said to him.

"Wake up, pard! wake up and rustle round," Thurston was saying. "We've struck it rich and no mistake. Another steamer got in last night from New York around the Horn, and bound for 'Frisco. I've got a show for a steerage berth on her, and I've got you into the cabin with the swells. But she's going to light out at sunrise, and we've got to put in some lively licks to get aboard."

This was indeed news, and it aroused Linn most effectively.

"How on earth did you manage it?" he inquired, as his partner busily gathered up their few belongings.

"Manage it!" exclaimed the miner, "there warn't no manage about it. It was just the blamedest kind of bull luck, such as I've been having right along ever since I struck up with you. Why, there warn't but twenty chances, and more'n five hundred galoots to snab onto 'em. To give all hands a square deal, the sharp that runs the agency shop says, 'Show up your tickets, gentlemen, and I'll give you each a number. Then we'll have a drawin' over in Slim Jim's keno ranch, and the first twenty balls as comes out of the box, the numbers of which is likewise held, goes to 'Frisco. The rest waits for the next steamer. Sabe?'

"There was some kickers, of course, but the crowd agreed, and the fun commenced. You bet it beat monte for excitement. I cut up here for Moore's ticket, got it out of your clothes while you was asleep, took it down to the ranch and shoved it in. It was the last card dealt before the game closed, and likewise I held the last number drawed. 'Thirty-three?' says the agency sharp.

'Keno!' says I. Was the rest mad? Well, the word ain't a circumstance. But we're fixed, old man, and now we'll just skip right along outer this for old Californy shore, as the hymn says."

Linn saw about as much of Panama as the westward-bound immigrant from Europe does of New York City during his transfer at Castle Garden. He obtained confused ideas, in the early dawn, of narrow, rudely-paved streets, heavily-built houses roofed with red tiles, a fine cathedral the bells of which were sadly cracked and toneless, a strong sea wall provided with watch towers that looked like pepper-boxes, and batteries of antiquated bronze cannon, massive ruins overgrown with trees and draped with curtains of tangled vines, and everywhere, rising high above the roofs, hundreds of graceful palms. The place seemed like one seen in a dream, and before he could realize that he was really treading the streets of his first foreign city, it was left behind. In a clumsy flat-bottomed scow or lighter, he, with Thurston and the other lucky holders of tickets, was slowly sailing over the mile and a half of shoal water that lay between the crumbling sea wall of the city and the roadstead.

There being no mail to wait for, the steamer started almost as soon as they got aboard; and, running down the bay, dropped anchor an hour later within a biscuit toss of the orange groves on the wonderfully beautiful island of Taboga. This island rises a thousand feet above the blue waters of the bay, and from base to summit is covered with an unbroken mass of foliage. It was a delight merely to gaze upon the forest of orange, lemon,

lime, tamarind, banana, mango, cocoanut, and other tropical fruit-bearing trees that shaded and made pleasant the hills and valleys of this tropical Eden. Still greater was the pleasure of going ashore for a ramble under their sweet-scented branches, of eating their luscious fruits, and of lying lazily beside the great spring of cold water that gushes from a dark ravine near the landing-place.

As Taboga is the coaling station of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, the steamer remained here several hours, taking in coal and water for her twenty-five hundred mile run up the Pacific coast.

At last the starting gun was fired, the great wheels began to revolve, and Linn Halstead was once more off on a long sea voyage. This time it was to end only with the land of gold, the Dorado of his hopes. He had accomplished the first *somehow* of his determination; and though he was penniless and knew nothing of what lay before him, he was as light-hearted and as confident of success as though he had already won it. Had he not left behind him the dreaded Isthmus, with its hardships, its pestilence, and its extortions? Was not his presence on that steamer a most wonderful thing? As he recalled the manner in which he had been provided with a ticket, and the way in which that ticket had secured a passage, it seemed little short of miraculous. Thousands of adventurers like himself were making their slow way up the coast in sailing vessels that might occupy a hundred days or more on the voyage, and even in whale-boats and Indian canoes; while three weeks at the most would

see him at his journey's end. Had he not already acquired what his partner called a choice assortment of experience? Above all, had he not gained the friendship of one well versed in the ways of the country to which he was going? In spite of his failings and his lack of polish, Thirsty Thurston was daily proving himself to be as loyal and helpful a comrade as ever handled pick or rocked a cradle, and already Linn Halstead was beginning to prize his honest friendship beyond any he had ever known.

But two stops were made on the voyage, one at San Blas, in Mexico, and one at Monterey, then the capital of California, although the regular steamers touched at Acapulco and San Diego in addition to these ports. To our friends the two prominent incidents of the voyage were the coming aboard at San Blas of a young girl, apparently a Mexican or Spaniard, accompanied by a duenna, and the unfolding of a wonderful scheme by Thirsty Thurston.

While the former incident seemed to have no direct bearing upon the fortunes of Linn Halstead, and while he did not make the acquaintance of the ladies, they were the only females among all the passengers who thronged the ship, and he watched them with the natural interest of a young man just escaped from his teens. He was fascinated by the dark beauty of the girl, and upon the rare occasions that he heard it, he was thrilled, through and through, by the sweetness of her voice. Was it its sweetness, though? or was it a peculiar quality that vaguely recalled another, heard far away, years before?

Linn could not tell; but he pondered over it during the dreamy days and glorious star-lit nights passed on that tropic sea, until it became so impressed upon his memory that he recalled it long after he had lost all knowledge of its owner.

The other incident of the voyage, which was Thirsty Thurston's story, and the disclosure of a wonderful scheme, was of such a startling nature, and so nearly concerned our hero's fortunes, that it must be reserved for another chapter. Already the rugged sides of Tamalpais are rising grandly from the sea, the Golden Gate is opening, and in a short time the long voyage of the storm-beaten steamer will be ended, and she will lie at anchor in Yerba Buena Cove, just off the infant city of San Francisco.

CHAPTER V.

A GOLDEN SCHEME UNFOLDED.

Thirsty Thurston's Story.—Yankees and Mexicans.—Don Almiro is Saved.—His Grateful Acknowledgment.—The Map of the Val d'Oro.—The Partners Decide to Search for the Valley.—Plans for Raising Funds.—Through the Golden Gate.

THE story that Thirsty Thurston told Linn Halstead while they were steaming up the Pacific coast toward San Francisco, and the scheme that he unfolded, proved so interesting to the two men that the discussion of its details and possibilities occupied most of their waking hours during the voyage. In their many conversations and plannings they went over and over the same ground so often that, in this narrative, it would be a waste of time and space to report all that they said, interesting as it was to them at the time. Here, therefore, shall be given but the substance of the Californian's story, shorn of its picturesque language and of the many incidental anecdotes that had no direct bearing upon the case in hand.

It seemed that, a few months previous to his meeting with Linn, Thurston had been engaged upon that prospecting tour of the Southern diggings that ended in his rich strike at Mormon Gulch. To this neighborhood had flocked numbers of Mexicans, between whom and the American miners a feeling of the most bitter hostility

existed. This was partly the result of the recent war between the United States and Mexico, by which California had only just come into possession of the former country. It was also owing to the desire on the part of the Americans to have the entire gold-bearing region of their newly acquired territory reserved exclusively to them. To accomplish this they made repeated attempts to drive from it not only Mexicans, but all other unnaturalized foreigners. This bitterness of feeling was continually breaking out in raids and counter raids and in open quarrels, by which lives were frequently lost.

One of the most successful of the Mexican miners was Don José Almiro, who was the proprietor of an extensive cattle ranch, or hacienda, in the vicinity of one of the Southern missions. He had taken a score of the mission Indians who were in his employ into the mountains, had located a claim on one of the branches of the Tuolumne River, and was accumulating a fortune from his workings when the Americans began to come into that part of the country. His very success irritated them ; but for a time the fact that he had a Yankee son-in-law protected the old gentleman from the effects of their ill-will. Finally, during an absence of this son-in-law, a number of the more lawless spirits among the American miners determined to raid the Almiro camp, upon the pretence that its Indians were dangerous to the safety of the community.

In the mean time, Thirsty Thurston, out of luck, penniless, and fever-stricken, had drifted into that region, and would have died there but for the kindness and cour-

teous hospitality of the old Mexican gentleman. When one of his Indians reported that a white man, who was probably one of the hated Americans, was dying by the roadside, Don Almiro immediately went to his assistance, and had him carefully taken to the camp, where he was provided with every comfort and attention that it afforded. As a result, Thurston recovered, and Don Almiro had converted one of his enemies into a most devoted personal friend and admirer.

When, therefore, shortly after his recovery, Thurston learned of the contemplated raid upon the Mexican camp, he was more than ready to fly to his preserver's assistance. Although nearly twenty miles away, and rendering himself liable to be mistaken for a horse thief by the act, and as such shot at sight. he sprang upon the back of the first saddled animal that came to hand, and rode as though for his life. He reached the camp only a few minutes in advance of the raiders, but in time to send the Don and such of his property as was easily portable from it. He remained behind, and by an exhibition of splendid courage managed, unaided, to hold the entire hostile party in check a few minutes longer. They were precious minutes for Don Almiro, and when Thurston finally rejoined him, he was in a place of safety.

The Don had been ignorant of the proposed outrage, and totally unprepared to resist an attack of the kind contemplated. He almost doubted his friend's word that it was to be made, and would have stayed and braved his enemies had not Thurston and several of his devoted servants forced him to fly. By so doing they

saved his property, and probably his life also; for when the raiders, inflamed with whiskey, discovered that he had escaped them, they not only destroyed his camp and flume, but killed several of his helpless Indians, threatening to do the same to him if he ever returned to that part of the country.

Thurston accepted the Don's grateful thanks for this service, but refused to touch an ounce of the golden reward that was almost forced upon him. In declining it he said: "No, Don; being what you are and can't help being, you just naturally forks over a pile of dust to the hombre that you thinks has saved your scalp, and euchred the ducks that was after it. Likewise, being what I was brung up to be, I don't take no offence, but says, 'Not any for the subscriber,' and bows. Now we've both played to a square deal. All hands has anted up handsome, and the game's a draw."

When Thurston had seen his friend beyond reach of pursuit he left him, and hastened to restore his borrowed horse to its owner before serious consequences should result. At the same time, Don Almiro turned in the direction of his mission ranch, determined thereafter to devote himself to pursuits less hazardous and more congenial than gold-digging.

The next meeting of the two men was on the deck of the steamer that was to convey Thurston to Panama on his way to the States, and the Don to San Blas on his way to the City of Mexico. As they voyaged together Señor Almiro again urged upon Thurston the acceptance of a substantial reward for his timely assistance. He claimed

that the other should share at least half of the property he had saved from the raiders. Upon Thurston's persistent refusal to touch a dollar of the Don's wealth, the latter finally said:

"Well, Señor Americano, since of my gold you will not accept, I must give you zat which will find it for you in such quantities as would make ze Señor Crœsus himself envious."

Upon this he produced and handed to Thurston a bit of parchment upon which was a rude tracing. He said that, if followed from a certain point on the Rio Americano, which he minutely described, this tracing would guide its possessor to a depression in the high Sierras known as the Val d'Oro, or Golden Valley. The existence of this valley was firmly believed in by the mission fathers, who had learned of it from their Indian converts years before. For fear lest a knowledge of its treasures should attract just such throngs of adventurers as were now swarming over the country, they had forbidden the Indians ever to make mention of it, with threats of the severest penalties in case of disobedience. So, in spite of vague rumors concerning it that, whispered among the gold-diggers, had already started forth several fruitless expeditions, its location still remained a mystery. How the Don obtained his information regarding it and gained possession of this parchment map of its surroundings, he did not relate to Thurston. He, however, assured the miner that there was not the slightest doubt as to the accuracy of the tracing nor in regard to the vast amounts of gold to be discovered within the narrow limits of the

valley by any one fortunate enough to reach it. The only condition he attached to his gift was that, if Thurston should ever return to California and make a successful search for the valley, he would promise to visit his ranch near the mission of Soledad, and there relate to him the story of his adventures.

Thurston had readily given this promise, and had accepted the bit of parchment as the easiest way of gratifying the Mexican's desire of rewarding him for his services. He, however, attached but little value to it, because, in the first place, he doubted if he should ever return to California, and, in the second place, he had not the slightest faith in the existence of the Val d'Oro or of its alleged treasures.

After bidding the Don good-by at San Blas, he thought no more of the matter until one evening when, in Panama, he accidentally overheard a conversation from which he learned that others believed in the existence of the Golden Valley, and that another expedition was shortly to be fitted out to attempt its discovery. Even this was not sufficient to induce him to return to San Francisco. It was not until he found himself penniless in Chagres that he thought of retracing his steps and endeavoring to secure the treasure that he was still more than half inclined to consider mythical.

His first thought in connection with the project had been that he could not set out upon such a search alone, but must have at least one companion. Who, of all his gold-digging acquaintance, could he rely upon with the implicit confidence that he must necessarily repose in the

sharer of such an adventure? As they passed in review before his mind, with their many noble traits he saw also their failings; and one after another was rejected as unfitted for the undertaking. Then he met Linn Halstead, toward whom he was strongly drawn from the very first. He studied the young man closely, and while he detected certain failings in his character, and also remembered his inexperience, he discovered so many admirable qualities in him that he finally decided to divulge his secret, and invite him to share equally in whatever might result from it.

Halstead listened to all this with breathless interest and an ever-growing excitement. When Thurston finally asked if he would advise a search for the alleged treasure valley, and if he were willing to embark in it himself, he exclaimed:

"Go in search of it! Of course I would! I would start the very moment we landed in San Francisco, and never stop until we found it or some other valley equally full of gold. And am I willing to go with you? Just you lead the way, old man, and see how I'll follow you. You can't penetrate any hole in all the Sierras but you'll find me close at your heels. Why, Thurston, this scheme is my second 'somehow.' I'm sure of it!"

So it was settled that, as soon as they could make arrangements to prosecute their search for the Golden Valley, it should be begun. The greatest difficulty that at first presented itself was their lack of money. This was, of course, indispensable; for without it they would neither procure the outfit necessary for their expedition

nor the supplies upon which they must depend for several months.

At Monterey the Mexican girl who had so interested Linn left the steamer with her companion, and the young man watched the boat that carried them ashore with very decided feelings of regret, and the sensation of having experienced a personal loss. He was quite melancholy for an hour or so after the steamer had resumed her voyage; but, in the interest of discussing plans with Thurston, the feeling wore off, and the fair Mexican was soon but a pleasant memory.

It was in this laying of plans that Thurston learned to rely upon Halstead's good sense and judgment; for though the young man was inclined to act upon impulse, whenever he did allow himself time to think he developed what his partner called a "remarkably level head." With the characteristic recklessness of a gold-digger, Thurston suggested a monte-table or a faro bank as the proper source from which to replenish their funds, and urged the good luck that had recently attended him as his reason for believing that he might, in a single night, win an amount sufficient for their purpose. To this Halstead would not listen for a moment. He said: to begin with, they had no funds to risk at a gaming table; and to end with, he would have nothing to do with any scheme that depended upon gambling for support.

So that question was settled, though in what way they should raise funds was as undecided as ever when the cliffs of Tamalpais hove in sight, and the steamer drew near to the Golden Gate.

They hurried past the sentinel Farallones in company with several sailing vessels. all bound for that superb rock-hewn portal that gives access to one of the grandest harbors of the world. In the light of the setting sun, the three miles of dancing waters, forming the gateway between the lofty mountain whose feet they bathed and the San Francisco hills, were tinged with a yellow glory that gave them a clear title to the name of Golden.

As yet there was no sign of a city. The sea-washed mountain towered above them on the north, and softly rounded, wind-swept hills bounded their southward view. On the slope of one of them, nestled amid the thick chaparral, they could see the white walls of the old Presidio ; but no other sign of human habitation was yet revealed.

Directly before them, at the inner end of the channel, as though guarding the broad bay that lay beyond, rose the abrupt front of Alcatraz Island. To the right of it they could see the island of Yerba Buena, and beyond it, in the purple distance, the massive form of Monte Diablo.

As darkness was drawing on, it was deemed inadvisable to run in among the shipping at anchor off the city before morning ; so, rounding to the left between the dark green slopes of Angel Island and the eastern base of Tamalpais, a berth for the night was found in the pleasant little bight of Saucelito. Just above the beach at this point gushed forth the crystal springs from which all the shipping visiting the bay, as well as San Francisco itself, drew supplies of drinking water. That in the steamer's tanks being nearly exhausted, a boat was sent

ashore for sufficient to last through the night; but the thirsty passengers waited in vain for its return. In the morning it was discovered on the beach empty and deserted, while its crew were probably well on their way toward the diggings. This alone was ample proof that the land of gold had been reached, and the excited passengers became wild in their impatience to tread the streets of its young metropolis.

Without risking the loss of more of his crew in an attempt to obtain water, the captain of the steamer ordered the anchor up, and hastened to bring his weary voyage to a conclusion. As the sun rose, the great ship rounded the northern point of Yerba Buena Cove, on the shore of which, following the curve of its crescent, lay the new-born city of San Francisco.

In the roadstead fifty or more sea-going vessels, flying the flags of all nations, lay at anchor. Many of them were absolutely deserted and abandoned, every soul of their crews, from captain to cabin-boy, having joined in the wild rush for the gold fields. So here the good ships had waited for months, idly swinging at their anchors, and here they might wait for months to come before spreading their sails for another voyage. Some of them rotted at their idle moorings, and others were hauled up as far as possible on the flats in front of the city. Here they served as store-ships or warehouses for the reception of unsalable merchandise.

Other ships, just arrived, were discharging valuable cargoes into a fleet of small boats that hurried to and fro between them and the shore. There, bales of silk, cases

of wine, fine furniture, and all other conceivable articles of luxury or necessity were tumbled in promiscuous heaps on the wet sands. From these much of this property would, in course of time, be sorted out by its owners and carried away, while the remainder would be left to lie indefinitely at the mercy of the elements.

CHAPTER VI.

SAN FRANCISCO IN THE SPRING OF '49.

A City of Tents.—Its Mixed Population.—Linn Embarks in Business.—Clear Profits of Three Thousand Per Cent.—The Plaza and its Surroundings.—Gold Digging in the Streets.—A "Nifty" Turn-out.—Merrill's-on-the-Hill.—An Advance in Real Estate.

NOTHING in the history of America since its discovery has equalled the magic by which the city of San Francisco grew in the single year 1849 from a handful of tents or slight structures of wood and cloth sheltering perhaps a thousand people to a commercial metropolis covering miles of territory, with blocks of substantial buildings, and containing a population of thirty thousand souls. As seen from the deck of the steamer by Linn Halstead, in the early sunlight of a bright May morning, the embryo city presented a most unique and picturesque appearance; but it was that of a temporary encampment rather than of a permanent settlement. One brick store, a score of adobe buildings, a hundred frame houses, and a confused jumble of tents, shanties, huts, and makeshifts of every description were scattered for a mile along the shore of the cove. From here they were just beginning to climb the sandy hill-sides beyond it, and to push straggling arms into the hollows between them. The frame buildings were the merest shells, with inner walls, ceilings, and partitions of tightly stretched white muslin or

brown calico. More than one half of the business establishments were simply sheds of rough boards, with canvas roofs, and open in front. In these a couple of planks laid across barrels formed the counters; the proprietors lived and slept amid the promiscuous assortment of goods heaped behind them, and every available inch of exterior space was covered with flaming advertisements, that would have shamed a circus poster, of what was to be found within. Two or three streets, or rather roads, ran parallel to the bay, and a dozen more had been laid out at right angles to them. In many cases these had been cut into the hill-sides ten or twelve feet below the original surface of the slope, so that the houses lining them could only be reached by ladders.

The city could as yet boast no wharves, and the steamer's passengers, with their baggage, were landed by small boats directly on the beach. Here Thurston left his partner seated on Moore's tool-chest to look out for their effects, while he went into the town, which during his six weeks of absence had changed almost beyond his recognition, to hunt up old friends and a boarding place.

As Linn sat there he gazed about him in curious bewilderment. On all sides were hurrying, excited throngs of people, representing more nationalities than were ever before assembled within a similar limit of space. There were Americans from every State and Territory in the Union. The cleanly shaved individual, dressed in broadcloth and just arrived from New York, jostled the tangle-bearded, long-haired miner, fierce of

aspect and loud of voice, just in from the diggings, and clad in tattered flannel, dirt, and buckskin, but perhaps counting his dollars by the thousand, while the new-comer had expended his last cent in getting there. Excited Frenchmen, phlegmatic Germans, swarthy Spaniards smoking cigarettes, blue-eyed Scandinavians, pig-tailed Chinamen, Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands, Mexicans wearing gay serapes, Peruvians and Chilians with their heads thrust through brown llama wool ponchos, burly Englishmen, canny Scotchmen, convicts from Australia, devil-may-care sons of the Emerald Isle, Italians, Greeks, and Portuguese—all were there, drawn from the remotest corners of the earth by the irresistible attraction of the golden magnet.

Halstead wondered, as he listened to the medley of voices that rose from this human pot-pourri, if the confusion of tongues about the Tower of Babel could have been any greater.

Each man in the throng was too intent upon his own affairs to take notice of his neighbors, and all were hurrying, perspiring, and working, as though conscious that they had a city to build, and that it would be as well to complete the job that day if possible. Every now and then a pistol shot rang out from one or another of the numerous drinking and gambling dens that seemed to occupy some part of nearly every other establishment in the town, and perhaps a bullet would whistle over the heads of those in the street. New-comers would duck instinctively ; but the old residents, who had been there a month or so, paid no more attention to such trifles than

Golden Days.—Pages 58-59.

BEFORE T

BEFORE THE HOTEL.

they would to the hum of a mosquito. A temporary excitement would be created by the reckless dashing through the crowd of some drunken, yelling, pistol-firing horseman, or of a wild steer just escaped from its corral; but it would quickly subside as the former either broke his neck or came to grief in some other way, and the latter, captured by lariat-swinging vaqueros, was dragged off to slaughter.

In many of the vacant spaces near him Linn saw the booths of coffee, pie, and cake venders, at which newly arrived miners were eagerly drinking coffee at half a dollar a cup, or buying pies at a dollar apiece. He also became interested in a rude stand constructed from two boxes and a board, at which newspapers published in the principal Eastern cities two months before were selling readily at a dollar and in some cases at two dollars each. This sight suggested an idea to him. Why should not he begin at once to accumulate his fortune? He remembered that all the vacant space in the chest on which he was sitting was stuffed with newspapers to keep the tools in place and prevent their rattling about.

Stimulated by the excitement and bustle about him, to think was to act, and in less than five minutes Linn had smoothed out the twenty or more papers of various dates that he had found in the chest, and was established in business as a San Francisco merchant. In less than five minutes more he had sold one New York paper of a later date than any in the stock of his rival for two dollars, and several others at from half a dollar to a dollar each. At the end of half an hour, when Thurston returned, his

partner had sold out his entire stock of goods, and retired from business with a fortune of sixteen dollars in his pocket. He had also received and promptly refused an offer of $500 for his chest of tools. In doing so he had considered that such an offer probably meant that they were worth much more than that sum, and also that in the undertaking upon which he and his partner had embarked tools might be even more valuable to them than money.

"Hooray for us!" shouted Thurston when Linn told him of his business transactions. "You'll do for Californy, pard. You was right, too, about the tools. They're worth a thousand dollars if they are a cent; for with that outfit to back him, a man can make his twenty dollars a day right along, and never go outside of little old 'Frisco to do it either. But come on and let's pack our traps up to the grub ranch, where I've signed for a claim, and when we get there I'll tell you what luck I've had."

By this time Linn had become sufficiently accustomed to his friend's style of speech to understand that he now referred to either a hotel or a boarding-house, where he had registered his name for a room, and he looked around for a dray, or at least a porter that could be engaged to carry their baggage to it. Upon his asking Thurston where one of these could be found, the latter burst into a hearty laugh and exclaimed:

"Why, son, them two-wheeled wagons gets fifty dollars for every load they carries; and as for a porter, there ain't nothing so low down as that in the whole settle-

ment. If there was one he'd call himself 'a master of transportation,' and charge a dollar for reading the label on your box. Oh, no! A man's got to shoulder his own troubles out here in 'Frisco, and the golden rule of this golden country, in these here golden days of '49, is, 'Do for yourself what others won't do for you.'"

As he talked the big Californian shouldered the tool-chest, and taking Linn's valise in one hand, started off, followed by his partner carrying his own hand-bag and a gunny sack that contained Thurston's small stock of clothing. The miner called it his "Government trunk with a buckskin lock."

Leaving the water front, and entering one of the cross streets that offered a smooth road-bed of stiff clay, they walked up the hill-side to the Plaza, or "Portsmouth Square," as it was beginning to be called. Here they stopped for a minute to rest and look about. On the upper side of the Plaza was a long low adobe building, used as the Custom House, and in front of it stood a tall pole from which the American flag was flying. On the opposite side was the Parker House, a two and a half story frame building of about sixty feet frontage, which at that time was rented for $110,000 a year, payable monthly, in advance. The City and United States Hotels, the Miners' Bank, a number of gambling houses, the most noted of which were Dennison's Exchange, El Dorado, the Bella Union, Verandah, Aquila d'Oro, and St. Charles, together with a dozen restaurants and several stores, also faced the Plaza, which was the very heart and business centre of the city.

Among the many strange sights that he saw during this first visit to the Plaza, two interested Halstead particularly. One was that of a number of persons, several of whom were mere children, digging up the soil in front of the El Dorado gambling saloon, with knives, crumbling it to dust in their hands, blowing upon it, and picking from it something that they carefully wrapped in bits of paper.

Thurston laughed at his companion's curiosity regarding this, and told him he might see the same sight at some part of the Plaza almost any hour of the day, but especially in the morning, as that was the best time for finding gold in these dry diggings.

Even with this explanation Linn could hardly believe that the persons whom he was watching were actually digging gold right there in the heart of the city. Nevertheless they were, though what of the precious metal they found had doubtless been dropped from the dust bags of those who frequented the hotel bars and gambling saloons, or was swept from the various buildings on the Plaza. As it was almost the only currency circulating in the city, and must be weighed each time it changed hands, of course more or less of it was spilled at each transfer. At that time, too, gold dust was so plentiful in San Francisco that those who possessed it in any amount would not take the trouble to handle it carefully. A "flush" miner scorned to pick up a quantity representing less than a dollar, and rather than thus demean himself he would brush it from the counter like so much dirt, or let it lie where it had fallen. Many of the miners, to

show their utter disregard for trifling sums of wealth, refused to spend or accept any coin of less than five dollars in value, and on being given small change, no matter to what amount, would fling it about the streets by the handful.

The second object that especially attracted Linn's attention was a perfectly appointed English turnout that rolled as proudly amid the donkeys, mules, dashing horsemen, and nondescript pedestrians of the street as though the Plaza were a London park. It was a handsome victoria, richly upholstered, glistening with new varnish, and drawn by a pair of sleek, carefully groomed carriage horses, with arching necks, tails cut square, and silver-mounted harness. On the box, as rigid and solemn as the most aristocratic of his race, sat a coachman, in the details of whose get-up nothing had been neglected. Not a speck dimmed the lustre of his tall silk hat, with its neat cockade at one side. His dark green livery was set off by silver buttons, and the mahogany tops of his boots contrasted nicely with their well-polished leather. His white corduroy breeches were skin-tight in fit, and he held the reins and a long-lashed whip in neatly gloved hands.

The sole occupant of this elegant carriage was one of the roughest-looking miners that even those early days could boast. He seemed to glory in the matted wildness of his beard, the untrimmed luxuriance of his hair, the peculiar dilapidation of his brimless hat, the tattered airiness of the rags that served him for clothing, and the ample ventilation at the toes of his long boots. With a cigar

between his teeth, a bottle of champagne in one hand and a pistol in the other, with which he took occasional shots at objects of passing interest, he lounged easily back on the soft upholstery. His feet were uplifted on the edge of the carriage doors, and he surveyed the ordinary human beings who thronged the streets about him with an air of calm and superior indifference.

"Who is it that, dressed like a beggar, owns and rides in such an elegant carriage?" almost gasped Halstead at sight of this extraordinary spectacle.

"Oh, only some galoot from the diggings who has got more dust than brains!" answered Thurston. "He don't own the outfit. 'English 'Arry,' the duck that's driving, owns it. He brought it over here from Australia on a spec. The party inside pays twenty dollars an hour in advance as long as he rides in it, and is held for all damage, even to the smallest scratch on the varnish. But he thinks he's having a bully time, and he'll ride just as long as his pile holds out. Then he'll go back to the Yuba, or the Feather, or whatever river he came from, and scratch round for more dust, to go on another burst with."

"Well, if that isn't about the most foolish and unsatisfactory way of spending money I ever heard of!" remarked Halstead.

"Oh, no, it ain't! There's more foolish ways than that, and one of 'em is subscribing it for the support of monte sharps, same as I've been doing with mine," said Thurston.

"And the same as you are not going to do again, so long as you leave your money in my charge," answered Linn, laughing and picking up the bags.

"Well, pard, that depends on how strong the hankering after a game gets hold on me, and how good your grit is," replied the big miner with a grim smile, as he again shouldered the tool-chest.

Their next stop was at Merrill's-on-the-Hill, a comfortable boarding-house built by a Yankee carpenter and managed by his wife, who was one of the very few women to be seen in San Francisco at that time. Being an old friend of the Merrill's, Thurston had, as an especial favor, obtained for himself and his partner a room without other occupants at the modest rental of twenty dollars per week, with meals extra at one dollar each. Linn looked aghast when these prices were mentioned, and wondered where the money was to come from to pay them, or how they were to accumulate any for their proposed expedition while living at such rates. Thurston, however, assured him that it was all right, and that at any of the so-called first-class hotels on the Plaza he would be charged $100 per week for accommodations and food equal to those furnished by the Merrills.

On taking their things to their room they found it to be on the ground floor, and quite large and comfortable for an apartment in a San Francisco lodging-house of that time. It was about six by ten feet, with walls and ceiling of white muslin. It boasted a window that gave a fine view of the town and bay, and was furnished with two home-made cot beds, two stools, a washstand sup-

porting a tin basin, a bucket of water, and a small looking-glass.

"There," said Thurston, depositing the tool-chest on the floor and gazing about with an air of extreme satisfaction, "this is what I call richness, likewise luxury. At most any other grub ranch in Californy that I know of they'd pack four, not to mention six men in a box of this size, and call it first class and comfortable."

Halstead only smiled at this statement, though he afterward learned, by sad experience, that it was a true one, and asked Thurston what his luck of an hour before had been.

"Why, haven't I told you, pard?" exclaimed the other. "It was just the biggest kind of luck for me and you, too. Coming up here I struck a land sale in the Plaza, where a sharp was knocking down to the highest bidder town lots on which no taxes couldn't be corralled. They seemed to be going cheap, and I thought I'd salt down one or two just for a spec. So I sailed in, and was seeing another duck, and going him one better every time for a fifty vara lot, when an old pard of mine steps up and says, 'Hello, Thirsty, bidding in your own land, be you?'

"'Own land,' says I; 'what do you mean?'

"'Why,' says he, 'the three fifty varas they're selling now are yours. Don't you remember buying them of Joe Jenkins 'bout a year ago?'

"Then it all came back to me how Jenkins was bursted, and wanted to get back to the States, and I let him have the dust for his passage, and he said he'd turn over to

me three lots he owned out in the chaparral somewheres. Nobody thought they was worth ten dollars, and I never even took the trouble to find out where they was located. They must be somewheres handy to the settlement though, for a man at the sale offered me five thousand apiece for them. Now it strikes me that if we was to sell out one of these claims, and you was to keep one, and I was to keep one, we'd be pretty well heeled for our trip, and likewise have something snug tucked away against the time we came back again."

"Well, that's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of!" exclaimed Halstead. "But, Thirsty, old man, I don't know why you count me in for one of those lots. I haven't any claim on them."

"Hain't no claim! Why, pard, we're pardners in everything, ain't we?" asked Thurston in a tone that sounded grieved and anxious.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM MID-DAY TO MIDNIGHT.

Partners in Everything.—A San Francisco Zephyr.—Wang Tong's Restaurant.—Luminous Houses.—Gambling Dens.—Their Decorations and Attractions.—Thurston Falls in Love.—He also Sees, Pursues, and Fails to Capture an Old Enemy.—The Enemy Discovers his Secret.

THE manifest anxiety with which Thirsty Thurston asked if they were not partners in everything gave Halstead a deeper insight into the man's nature than he had before possessed. Like a flash of light it showed him how heartily, and without a single mental reservation, the other had entered into this partnership, and also how keenly he would wound the honest fellow's feelings by refusing to accept a half or, if need be, the whole of whatever he possessed in the world. It took but a moment's thought to convince him of this, and without hesitation he answered :

"Of course we are, Thirsty, partners in everything, in fair weather or foul, in riches or poverty ; and there's nothing I should like better than to own my first bit of real estate right here, in what you call this 'little old town of 'Frisco.'"

Thurston's face brightened wonderfully at this, and holding out his hand, which Linn grasped warmly, he exclaimed :

"Put it there and shake once more, pard ! I knew

you wasn't the sort of a chump that would go back on a fellow just because he'd struck a bit of luck."

"No, partner," replied the other, almost wincing under the powerful squeeze of the big hand that still held his, "I won't go back on you on account of good luck nor yet of bad; but I'll stick to you through thick and thin, through heat and cold, through thaw and freeze." As he spoke, and realized what he was saying, the young man felt as though he were registering a vow.

"Freeze is the word, pard!" cried the big miner. "You freeze to me and I'll freeze to you till all hell couldn't melt us apart. Beg your pardon for using the word, and you the son of a Gospel sharp; but it slipped out, and I don't know of anything hotter nor yet more likely to melt a pardnership.

"Now," he continued, as he released Linn's hand, "let's set down and talk business. Having struck hard pan and pay dirt, all we've got to do is to get the cradle in 'posish,' set her a-going, and scoop the pile."

"The cradle?" repeated Halstead inquiringly.

"Oh, I forgot you ain't been from the mountains yet, and don't sabe the lingo. What I mean is, that the three fifty varas having settled the dinero question, all we've got to do is to turn one of 'em into dust, stake out the others so the Injuns can't bounce 'em, corral our outfit, and light out for the gulch where the nuggets is. Sabe, hombre?"

"Yes, I believe I have a glimmering of your meaning," replied Halstead slowly. "You would convert one of these re-acquired pieces of real property into cash, clear

the title of the others so as to provide against any future misunderstanding regarding their ownership, purchase the necessary supplies for our expedition, and set out on the search for the Val d'Oro. Is not that it?"

"Well, I reckon you've got the rights of it," answered Thurston somewhat dubiously; "but, pard, you've got a heap to learn in the way of talking plain."

It was by this time nearly noon. The bright sky and warm sunlight of the morning had disappeared behind gray clouds of mist that were rolling in raggedly over the hills from the sea, and would soon settle down like a blight over the town. A fierce, chill wind howled through the gulches, whirling the sand and dust of the streets aloft until the whole air was filled with it, flapping the tent curtains, bulging out the canvas roofs, and shaking slight frame buildings until they rattled. Sand sifted in under the doors and through the window casings, dust and grit settled over everything; yet nobody seemed to mind the weather, or to consider it anything unusual. It was but a fair sample of what was experienced nearly every day during the dry season, or from April to October. At the same time the clanging of dinner bells, the beating of gongs, and the tooting of horns that began at twelve o'clock in all parts of the town, and were continued almost without cessation for an hour, were most welcome, as inviting all out-of-door workers to a short respite from the wind and blinding dust.

After dinner Thurston went out to open negotiations for the disposal of one of his lots of land, while Halstead sat down to write a long letter home. His experiences

had been so varied, and he had so much to relate concerning them, that this occupied him for the whole afternoon.

Upon Thurston's return he said that it would take several days, perhaps a week, to settle up his business satisfactorily, and that Halstead must manage to amuse himself as best he could during that time. Then he proposed that they should go out to a Chinese restaurant for their supper, to which proposition his partner readily acceded, as he was most curious to visit one of these places. Thurston's liking for them was based upon the fact that, by the payment of a dollar each, their patrons were allowed to eat as much as they chose, and that the dishes were not only always well cooked, but were generally palatable.

After studying the exterior of Kong Sing's on Montgomery Street, Wo Hi's on Kearney Street, Wang Tong's on Sacramento Street, and Tong Ling's on Jackson Street, and making guesses as to the meaning of the signs, in Chinese characters, that announced the bills of fare for the day, they finally entered beneath Wang Tong's triangular flag of yellow silk. The place was quiet and well ordered, the Chinese waiters were neat and attentive, and the food, served in tiny dishes, was so good that while the partners had little idea of what they were eating, they made a most hearty and satisfactory meal. The tea and coffee were the best to be had in the city, and would alone have served to make these restaurants popular with their English-speaking patrons.

With sunset the wind fell, and the evening became so

calm and beautiful as to invite a prolonged stroll through the streets of the town.

If the appearance of San Francisco was unique and striking by daylight, it was doubly so at night. The slight construction of its frame buildings allowed the lamplight from within to shine out through innumerable chinks, cracks, and knot-holes, until it produced a most fantastic effect. The tents and houses with canvas or muslin walls became wholly luminous. Upon their white walls gigantic shadows of grotesque figures, ever changing and assuming new and absurd positions, constantly appeared and vanished. The surprises thus produced were like those of the transformation scenes at a pantomime. Nor was sound any more to be confined by the flimsy cotton walls than light. The daytime noise of saw and hammer was gone, but in its place were loud talking and laughter, music from scores of instruments more or less skilfully handled, singing, dancing, quarrelling, besides innumerable other sounds indicative of the time and place, as well as of the nature of the inhabitants of the Californian metropolis in the early days of its existence.

There were no public lamps, but none was needed, for the illuminated structures that lined the streets, and the brilliant decoy lamps set in front of the gambling houses and bar-rooms, furnished ample light for those whose business or pleasure took them abroad.

The centres of greatest attraction at night were the gambling hells, and in them until after midnight could be found a full half of the population of the city. This

was perfectly natural, for there were no other places of amusement. Nineteen twentieths of the population were men, mostly young and craving excitement. Without homes, and only lodged in cheerless barracks, they were as readily attracted by the glitter, the music, and the company of these places as moths to a candle.

Thus, as Halstead and Thurston walked through the streets after leaving the Chinese restaurant and came to the Plaza, it would have been surprising if they had not directed their steps toward one of the brilliantly lighted gaming houses, just as, in an older city, they would have dropped into a reading-room, a theatre lobby, or any other place in which they would be likely to meet with congenial company. So great was the crowd about the El Dorado that for some time it was impossible to effect an entrance. Once inside they found the centre of interest to be a young woman, who, uplifted in a small gallery over the bar, and arrayed in a gaudy costume of tawdry finery, was playing upon a violin, and smiling impartially at the throng of bearded faces upturned toward her.

She was doing this for the modest salary of fifty dollars a night, and was at that moment the leading attraction in the way of amusement that the city afforded. Under the spell of her smiles and music gambling went merrily on, at the right monte and roulette tables scattered about the room, and, with impassive faces, the dealers raked in the piles of coin and golden dust that were poured out before them in steady streams. Between tunes the crowd charged upon the bar, at which drinks bearing most marvellous titles were deftly compounded by the white-

aproned "bar-keeps," and, with full tumblers, toasted the object of their admiration.

Thurston was enchanted. "Ain't she just a lamb?" he exclaimed, "and can't she make that fiddle howl? I tell you, son, it takes little old 'Frisco to attract the real high-toned beauties. They'll all pile in here after a while. Wouldn't I just marry this one to-morrow, though, if she'd have me!"

It is not at all likely that the young woman would have accepted the offer of marriage that Linn could hardly restrain Thurston from making her then and there. Already a dozen such offers had been shouted up to where she sat, and at each one she had only bowed and smiled, as she might at any other compliment.

Under the influence of his admiration for the presiding deity of the place, Thurston would have liberally patronized the monte-tables had not his partner restrained him from this also. He was very reluctant to leave the place, and it was only Halstead's threat that if they stayed there he, too, would learn the games, that finally induced him to submit to being dragged away.

They spent several hours in inspecting the interiors of a dozen other more or less pretentious establishments of this kind. In one they found a German band, in another a negro minstrel troupe, and in all music of some sort, beside the unfailing attractions of brilliant chandeliers, long mirrors behind the bars, and loud pictures on the walls. At length, to wind up their tour of inspection, they turned in to Dennison's Exchange.

At this place the gambling room was in the second story

of the building. The partners had hardly got inside and begun to mingle with the throng about the tables, when suddenly Thurston uttered a yell, and sprang after a man who was hurriedly making his way toward the door. He had gone before Halstead caught sight of his face. There was a confused struggle on the crowded stairway, a few shouts, oaths, and threats of shooting. Then the big miner returned, hatless, breathless, and full of wrath.

The man he was after had escaped, thanks to the crowd, and Thurston was too wise to attempt a search for him outside, where the many lighted spaces and deep shadows would have rendered him a fair target for a pistol shot.

"But who was he?" asked Halstead curiously.

"Who was he! Why, Tedder, Wake-up Tedder; and now that I know the blamed coyote is in the city, I won't rest till I've found him or drove him out of it."

It was midnight when the partners left the hot, stifling, smoke-laden atmosphere of the exchange, and returned to their boarding-place. Late as it was, however, they must needs take a look at the bit of parchment that they fondly hoped was to lead them to the Val d'Oro, and talk for awhile over their plans.

In the mean time, while they were out that evening, two men had applied at Merrill's for lodging, and had been given a room adjoining that of our friends. One of them, who had gone out, returned to the house shortly before Halstead and Thurston, and going to his room, had roused his companion to tell him of an adventure he had met with that evening. They talked in whispers in

the darkness, and became silent when they heard somebody enter the next room.

When Thurston produced the little tracing, and, with his partner, bent over the tool-chest on which it was outspread in light of a candle, one of the occupants of the other room crept softly to a slight rent in the muslin wall, and watched them breathlessly. He also strained his ears to hear what he might of their low-voiced conversation, and though he could catch but a word here and there, he managed to gain considerable information from it. He could not distinguish the lines of the tracing they were studying so earnestly, and he mentally chafed at the hard fortune that denied him the single look at it he so ardently desired. It was not until those whom he watched had gone to bed and given evidences of being asleep that Wake-up Tedder ventured to move from his cramped position. He crept cautiously to his own cot without even a whispered word to his room-mate, who was none other than the ex-Mayor of Puffertown, Conn.

These worthies had only reached San Francisco one day before our friends, and in seeking information as to what part of the diggings they should proceed, they had been advised, more in jest than earnest, to find the Golden Valley if they wished to obtain wealth easily and quickly. They had seized eagerly upon this idea, and had taken for Gospel truth every magnified rumor and incredible yarn concerning the valley that the old miners amused themselves by pouring into their willing ears. They would have started at once in search of it had they known in what direction it lay; but as each of

their informants located it in a different spot, they began to despair of learning anything reliable concerning it. They had, however, deemed it worth their while to remain in San Francisco a few days longer in hopes of hearing something more definite regarding the marvellous valley that they had fully decided was the one place in all California for them. For economy's sake they had removed from the hotel to which they had gone upon landing in the city, and had obtained a room at Merrill's.

Tedder's visit to the gaming houses that evening had not been for the purpose of gambling. He was far too cautious to risk his well-loved dollars in that way, and had merely gone in the hope of meeting somebody from whom he might extract some further information concerning the subject that had become his all-absorbing topic of thought.

He had seen Thurston before the latter caught sight of him, and had been filled with dismay ; for he had imagined both him and Halstead to be still on the Isthmus, or at the worst creeping slowly up the coast in some sailing vessel. Although not naturally a coward, a guilty conscience made him one in this instance, and he had hoped to creep from the room without being noticed by the men he and his companion had deserted and treated so shamefully.

Rejoicing in his escape from Thurston, Tedder had hurried home to tell Bodfish of the danger they were in from the vengeance of the big miner. It was while engaged in a whispered consultation as to the best course for them to pursue, that they were startled by hearing

the well-remembered voices of those whom they had every reason to regard as enemies in the next room. They quaked with fear as they thought of the flimsy barrier which alone protected them from the wrath that would so surely descend were their presence discovered, and it required all Tedder's courage, backed by his insatiable curiosity, to enable him to creep to the tiny rent in the wall disclosed by the light in the other room.

His overwhelming astonishment at what he saw and heard almost found expression in an exclamation that would have betrayed his presence. By a strong effort he restrained it, and when he crept back to his cot, it was with the knowledge that his enemies were in possession of the very information he so longed to obtain, and that they proposed to make their start from Sacramento City, to which place they would journey within a week.

Before Halstead and Thurston were up the following morning, the occupants of the room adjoining theirs had settled for their night's lodging and departed, without leaving a trace to indicate the direction they had taken.

CHAPTER VIII.

UP THE SACRAMENTO RIVER.

Wages in San Francisco.—Washing Sent to China.—The Schooner *Rainbow*.—Off for the Diggings.—Camping out.—Fool's Gold and "Mica Jim."—Scenes on the River.—Sutterville.—Sacramento, the Future Capital.—A Lively Camp, where "there warn't no Diggings."

THAT same morning Linn Halstead received an offer from Mr. Merrill, who had on hand contracts for the erection of a number of buildings, of an ounce (sixteen dollars) a day, to bring along his tools and work as a carpenter with him, so long as he should remain in the city. To one of Linn's temperament anything was better than idleness; and though he had but little knowledge of tools, and nothing had been further from his thoughts when he left home than the idea of turning carpenter, he promptly accepted the offer, and went to work. Although he spent but a week at this new trade, it proved a valuable experience to him. Not only did he learn to appreciate his chest of tools at their full worth, but he gained a stock of useful knowledge concerning the people of the extraordinary community to which he had come, and their methods of business.

Nothing could exceed the young man's astonishment at the prices demanded and readily paid for every article of necessity or luxury, and the marvellous rapidity with which results were attained. The very lumber

upon which he worked had cost from $600 to $1000 per thousand feet, and, by the terms of their contracts, large buildings must be finished, ready for occupation, within a week from the time they were begun. He saw eggs sell for seventy-five cents apiece, and cabbages from the Sandwich Islands in demand at two dollars a head. He heard daily of poor men who realized fortunes by a rise in the value of real estate, and who, as rich men, lost them in a single night spent at the gaming tables. He helped erect a long low building to be used as a bowling alley. It was completed in five days, and rented immediately at $5000 a month, payable in advance.

The novelty of his labor and the inspiriting scenes amid which he worked made it a positive pleasure, and this was in no degree lessened when, at the end of a week, six ounces of gold dust were weighed out and handed to him. Placing it in a new buckskin bag that he had procured for the occasion, he felt that at last he was really a Californian, and a full sharer in all the honor and glory that the name carried with it.

Linn had thus, during his first week in San Francisco, made something over a hundred dollars, and, like the famous Mr. O'Reilly of the song who kept a hotel, was conscious that he, too, was "doing quite well."

In the mean time, Thurston had finished his business transactions and made all necessary preparations for their expedition. But one thing remained to be done. Halstead insisted that, before leaving such civilization as the city boasted, he must have his two months' accumulation of soiled clothing washed.

Thurston smiled at this and said that, though they could probably get it done for a hundred dollars or so, they could not afford the time necessary to send it to China and back. Then he explained that, even at ten and twelve dollars per dozen, it was so difficult to obtain the services of washerwomen, or even of washermen, in the city, that most of the soiled clothing was sent either to China or the Sandwich Islands to be laundried.

In view of this fact, they decided to perform the operation themselves. Borrowing a tub from Mrs. Merrill, the two partners visited one of the numerous small ponds lying among the sand-hills a mile or so back from the city, and there devoted the greater part of a day to scrubbing, rinsing, wringing, and drying such of their apparel as was still in too good a state of repair to be thrown away. Although their washing was not done in the highest style of the art, they at least got their things clean, and returned to the city at night proud of their success and well satisfied with the result of their efforts.

They were to start for Sacramento City the following day, and Thurston was particularly anxious to be off because of the many rumors he had heard concerning the very valley for which they proposed to search. Although these rumors were vague and indefinite, they served to indicate that a great deal was being thought about the subject, and Thurston suspected that at least one if not more expeditions besides their own was contemplated to the mountains, to look for the Val d'Oro.

"And one of the most curious things about the whole business," remarked the miner, "is that whenever I follow

up the trail of one of these yarns I fetch up, sooner or later, against the name of Tedder. Now, however that blamed specimen got onto the scent and is mixed up with our prospecting beats me. He'd better keep clear of me, though; for if ever Thirsty Thurston gets a grip onto him, he'd wish he was a coyote safe hid in the sage-brush, or I'm a greaser."

They took passage on the trim little fourteen-ton schooner *Rainbow* that had formerly been a pleasure craft presented to Mr. Leidesdorff, of San Francisco, by the Russian Fur Company. She had been purchased by her present owner and captain for $5000, and he was coining money by carrying passengers between San Francisco and Sacramento City, a distance of 165 miles, at twenty-five dollars apiece, without meals, and five dollars per hundred pounds for baggage and freight. With all the business he could manage at these rates, he was one of the few men in the community who were not desirous of seeing steamers running on the river. Several of these had already made their appearance, but they were insignificant craft, unable to cope with the rough waters of the great bays, and they interfered but little with the trade of the schooners.

There was an exhilaration in the brisk sea breeze before which the *Rainbow* dashed across the waters of San Francisco Bay when once clear of the cove and its anchored fleet of deserted shipping. Linn Halstead enjoyed it heartily, and he felt a sense of freedom and exultation such as he had never before known as he watched the canvas town out of sight, and realized that his search for

gold was begun. He had no longer need to plan how his journeyings were to be accomplished, nor what he should do when they were ended. His way had been wonderfully smoothed of its difficulties, and the path ahead seemed straight and clear. He admitted to himself that there might be obstacles to overcome, but pooh! how insipid life would be if it were all smooth sailing!

The young man would have been greatly sobered, and would have seriously considered the advisability of giving up this undertaking upon which he was just embarked, could he have foreseen the terrible nature of the obstacles he was to encounter. As he could not, he was in the highest spirits, and in just the mood to enjoy the brisk run across the bay. From it the schooner passed through the straits of San Pablo and crossed the great bay of the same name. Here they saw hundreds of black seals, whose comical faces peered at them from the surface of the water in all directions, and scared up incredible numbers of wild water fowl that fluttered and screamed about the several rocky islets rising close beside the schooner's course.

Here, too, they began to pass many smaller boats, mostly under sail, but some of which were propelled by poles and oars. All of them were filled with adventurers bound like themselves for Sacramento City and the diggings. They were told that one of these small craft, a seaworthy-looking whale boat, had brought the company, which she still contained, all the way from the Sandwich Islands.

From San Pablo Bay they ran quickly through the

Carquinez Straits and close to the beautiful site on the left-hand shore destined to be occupied by the city of Benicia. Its projectors were already discounting its future greatness, and eagerly anticipating the time when it should rival San Francisco in size and commercial importance.

Suisun Bay now opened broad and shallow, and beyond it was uplifted the massive front of Monte Diablo, the giant of the coast range. At the upper end of Suisun Bay, on a low peninsula near the junction of two great rivers, the Sacramento flowing down from the north and the San Joaquin draining the vast tulé marshes of the south, our travellers saw three forlorn-looking houses that seemed to bow meekly beneath the name "New York of the Pacific." Easily overcoming any impulse to tarry at this pitiful Gotham of the West, they swept by it, and were soon stemming the flood of the Sacramento.

Although near its mouth this great river is only bordered by a thicket growth, beyond which, on either side, stretches the dead level of the interminable tulé marshes, a few miles farther up it flows between broad prairies edged with belts of fine forest trees. From these depended long cables of twisted vines, festoons of gracefully swaying moss, and huge clusters of mistletoe. With an average width of half a mile, and continually bending in long, easy curves, the noble stream presented exquisite vistas and bits of scenery that would have delighted the *Rainbow's* passengers had she been a large swift steamer, but of which they grew weary enough during the five days they were compelled to gaze upon them.

At nightfall, on that first day out from San Francisco, the schooner was run into a bank, and her passengers had the experience of trying to cook their supper over a smoking fire of wet wood, and at the same time of waging war against the myriads of mosquitoes that flocked to the feast. It is almost needless to say that both of these efforts resulted in lamentable failure. Neither bacon nor coffee would yield their richness to smoke alone, and the mosquitoes were easily victorious over their human enemies. So supper was made from ship biscuit, raw pork, and river water, and the same bill of fare answered for breakfast on the following morning.

The next night the schooner was at the lower end of Merritt's Slough, a cut-off by which twenty miles of river could be saved, and here the weary passengers made a comfortable camp in the heavy timber. A rude though well-cooked supper, and a cheerful hour spent around a roaring fire that the chill night air made very welcome, gave Linn Halstead pleasanter impressions of camp life than he had gained from the experience of the night before. The greater part of the two following days was spent in slowly warping the schooner from one forest tree to another up the tedious ten-mile length of the narrow cut-off.

As one of the passengers remarked, "For leisurely travelling this beat canalling all hollow." It gave them ample opportunity, however, for an exploration of the surrounding country, and for hunting. One of them shot a deer, while others brought in ducks and geese from the marshes; and with these additions to their

larder, the joys of camping out became more than ever apparent to such of the adventurers as had not before tasted them.

At their second camp in the slough, one of the passengers, who had been off by himself for quite awhile, excited the curiosity of the others by announcing his intention of remaining there, and by saying that while the rest might go farther if they chose, this place was good enough for him.

At first he refused to explain what he meant; but finally, saying that he did not suppose there was any use trying to keep the secret, for somebody would find it out sooner or later, he announced in an important tone that he had discovered gold and staked out a claim. He further electrified his hearers by telling them that the very ground on which they stood was full of the precious metal. In proof of this assertion he turned up some of the soil with his sheath-knife and showed it to contain innumerable shining particles that the new-comers eagerly pounced upon, and admitted to be, "sure enough, gold."

Thirsty Thurston enjoyed the excitement for a few minutes, and then, in answer to his young partner's questioning glances, said with a chuckle: "If that there stuff is gold, there's going to be a terrible big rise in the price of mica."

A moment's doubtful silence among his hearers was followed by a conviction of their mistake that broke forth in a great roar of laughter. From that day the unlucky discoverer of this "fool's gold" on the lower Sacramento was known as "Mica Jim," nor could his future

successes in the diggings ever efface the memory of his present exploit.

So swift was the current of the slough, and so many the snags and sand-bars that interfered with the *Rainbow's* progress, that when she emerged from it both her crew and passengers were heartily tired of warping, and hailed with gladness the fresh breeze of the open river. Before it they sped merrily along, now sighting a band of elk and now a drove of wild horses careering over the green prairies on either side. Immense flocks of ducks went "skittering" over the waters ahead of them; they wondered at the number of eagles' nests in the tall sycamores on the banks, and occasionally they caught glimpses of the distant snow-topped Sierras.

They began also to note scattered clearings and the cabins of squatters, who were raising vegetables for sale to future emigrants bound up the river. At one of these ranches, owned by a squatter named Schwartz, who had been in the country many years and was wise enough to let others dig his gold and bring it to him in exchange for the vegetables that he raised comfortably and easily at home, they stopped for a few minutes. Judging from the exorbitant prices that this man charged for everything edible with which he supplied our friends, it was easy for them to believe, when they heard of it some months later, that he cleared $25,000 that season.

Near this ranch were several small huts constructed of tulé reeds in and about which Halstead saw his first Indians. They were California diggers belonging to the branch of their tribe that lived wholly in the marshes, and

they were the most wretched specimens of their race to be found on the Continent. Consequently the young man was wholly disgusted with their appearance, and declared that if they were fair samples of the "noble red man," he hoped never to see another.

Late in the afternoon they passed the Russian Embarcadero, once a flourishing post of the Russian Fur Company, but now abandoned. Soon afterward, the wind dying out, they made a camp by moonlight among the oaks of a park-like forest on the river-bank.

The following morning they came in sight of two large sea-going vessels moored to a high bank, and on reaching the place found them to be store-ships containing supplies for the new town of Sutterville. It had just been started, but its projectors hoped to make it the landing-place and grand outfitting point for all travellers bound to the mines. They had certainly chosen a most beautiful location, on high, finely timbered land, and already they could boast the first brick building in that section of the country. It occupied a commanding position on a grassy swell a few hundred yards back from the river, and was constructed of native brick burned in a kiln near by. Sutterville was founded upon the brightest possible prospects, but the fickle tide of public favor swept past it and flooded three miles farther up the river, at its junction with the Rio Americano. There the settlement that was to become the great city of Sacramento, the State capital, and final absorber of all its small, would-be rivals, was at that time in the very first stage of its existence.

It was nearly noon before the *Rainbow* reached the

embarcadero of this future capital of a yet unborn State, and was made fast to the roots of an immense sycamore growing on the river-bank. Several deep-draught vessels that had been laboriously sailed and warped up the river, and a number of smaller craft laden with freight and passengers for the mines, here mingled their spars with the limbs of the forest trees. All were discharging cargoes; and when our friends landed on the high bank that served as a natural levee for the protection of the low ground behind it, they found themselves in the midst of a scene of wonderful bustle and activity. Still, marvellous as it appeared to them, it was but the first ripple of the mighty wave of travel and commerce even then surging toward this outpost of Western civilization.

On a plain, beneath the shade of spreading oaks and giant sycamores, were planted a number of deck cabins and galleys taken from the vessels and turned into dwellings and shops, forty or fifty houses of rough boards and canvas, and a hundred or so of tents. It was only the beginning, the first swelling in the bud, as it were, of a great city; but even this amazed Thurston beyond measure. Two months before, when he had passed the place, it had contained but two houses. He exclaimed:

"Well, pard, this beats the deck! I've seen good-sized camps blossom in the diggings inside of a week, but I knowed what made 'em grow. 'Twas the gold in the soil. But here I'm blamed if there ain't a city with ships and stores, monte banks and bar-rooms, where a while back there warn't nothing; and this ain't no diggings, neither."

Within three months from the date of the honest miner's surprise the same spot where "there warn't no diggings" was to be occupied by a city rivalling San Francisco itself in the importance and magnitude of its commercial transactions.

CHAPTER IX.

AN OUTPOST OF CIVILIZATION.

Sutter's Fort and its Surroundings.—The Discovery of Gold in California.—Sam Brannan and the Mormons.—Keysburg the Cannibal.—In the Horse Corral.—Fate of a Horse Thief.—The Outfit.—Good-by to the Fort.

BEING too anxious to continue their journey to tarry long amid the interesting scenes of Sacramento City, Halstead and Thurston soon had their modest outfit, including the tool-chest, on board an Oregon freight wagon. It was bound for Coloma, by way of Sutter's Fort, and for twenty dollars its driver consented to add their effects to his already heavy load, for transportation across the two miles of prairie to the fort. From there they would take their final departure for the mountains.

These Oregon wagons, driven by sturdy young farmers who had come down from the great northern Territory, were each drawn by teams of six fine oxen, and were proving very profitable to their owners. Their freight charges for the trip of fifty miles between the embarcadero and the Coloma diggings were forty dollars per hundred pounds, and in some cases they demanded and received one cent a pound per mile of distance. Thus did Oregon profit by the discovery of gold in California, and thus did her thrifty sons accumulate wealth from the diggings much more surely and quickly than the majority of those who wrested it from the soil.

Although the sun blazed down with an intense fervor on the open prairie across which our adventurers made their slow way after leaving the timber belt of the bottom lands, its heat was tempered by a brisk breeze from the distant mountains, and the tramp was a pleasant change from the tedious navigation of the river. The rainy season had ended some weeks before, but the prairie was still green and carpeted in brilliant patterns with a wonderful profusion of wild flowers, presenting every hue of vivid coloring. Great herds of horses and cattle roamed over the plains, and through the clear atmosphere the low walls and white tents of the fort were to be seen as distinctly as though less than half a mile away.

This fort, built by Captain John Sutter, a Swiss by birth and a soldier in the French army by profession, had for many years been the rallying point for Americans in the interior of Alta California. It was a square structure of adobe or sun-dried brick, with bastioned corners. Its thick outer wall, fifteen feet in height, was separated by a space of twenty-five feet from an inner wall five feet lower. This space, roofed in and partitioned into squares, had been occupied as workshops and dwellings by Captain Sutter's many employés. The ground thus enclosed was an open plaza, in the middle of which stood a tall pole bearing aloft the American flag. Small cannon were mounted on the bastion walls, and the only access to the interior was had through the massive gates, one on the south and one on the east. Opposite the southern gateway stood the substantial two-story house that had been Captain Sutter's own residence.

Here he had dwelt in peace and comfort, waxing rich in cattle and horses, and happy in devising and prosecuting numerous agricultural and other enterprises. He had subdued the Indians of all the neighboring tribes by kindness, firmness, and a display of strength. They had become his willing servants, and he had employed hundreds of them in his various undertakings. On the entire Pacific slope there was no more useful or prosperous settlement than the one at Sutter's Fort before the discovery of gold in 1848.

This discovery was made in January of that year by Mr. James Marshall, who was in Captain Sutter's employ, and who, under his direction, was building a saw-mill at Coloma, fifty miles away, on the south fork of the Rio Americano. In cutting a channel through a sand-bar for the raceway, shining particles were noticed in the dirt that was thrown out ; but not until several days after they were first seen was it suggested that they might be gold. An old Georgia miner who happened to be in that vicinity, and to whom they were shown, declared them to be the "genuine stuff," and the seeds of the golden fever that was in a few months to spread over the entire civilized world were thus sown.

Among the earliest diggers were a number of Mormons, piloted to the scene of the discovery by that Sam Brannan who afterward became one of the wealthiest and best-known men in San Francisco. This wily Latter Day Saint had no taste for the actual toil of gold-digging, but managed to secure a liberal share of what was dug by his followers by demanding a certain percentage of their

profits for having brought them there. They submitted to this tax until Brannan had acquired a handsome property from it, but finally they rebelled against its further payment. Upon this their leader called them fools for having paid it at all, and gathering up his spoils, left them for a more extended sphere of operations.

With the rush of adventurers that followed the discovery of gold came an end to the peace and prosperity of Sutter's Fort. Its owner, now well along in years, stood aghast at the overwhelming irruption of lawless strangers that his own unconscious act had caused to break loose upon his little community. His fort was overrun and appropriated by them, his crops were destroyed, his horses and cattle were stolen, and his Indians were either killed or driven away. Without possessing the first instinct of a gold-digger himself, the sturdy pioneer was soon forced to beat a retreat before the roaring tide of humanity that surged about him. He sold the fort and all that it contained to the traders, gamblers, and others who had already seized upon it, and with the dreams of a lifetime rudely dispelled, he retired to the quiet and privacy of a little farm on the Feather River.

Every house in the once well-regulated fort was, at the time of Linn Halstead's first visit, occupied as a hotel, a gambling saloon, a rum shop, or a store. Great holes had been broken through the outer walls to serve as doors and windows, the massive gates had been wrenched from their hinges, and the broad, cultivated fields of a year before were now covered with a rank growth of weeds.

The plaza was filled with a mob of miners just in from the diggings, and adventurers on their way to them. Outside scores of tents were pitched beside an equal number of loaded wagons, and in the evening many camp-fires cast their ruddy light over piles of miscellaneous merchandise, personal effects, and groups of tethered animals.

Upon reaching the fort Thurston and his companion went immediately to Captain Sutter's old dwelling, which was now occupied and kept as a hotel by a family named McClellan, who had come across the plains from the States the previous year. Like the Oregonians, they, too, had quickly discovered that there were surer and easier methods of obtaining gold in the diggings than by digging it. They sold the great canvas-topped wagon that had been their home for months, and the patient oxen that had drawn it two thousand miles, and with the proceeds rented Captain Sutter's house. By unceasing efforts Mrs. McClellan and her daughters made it and kept it up as the best hotel in the country outside of San Francisco. Its table, bountifully supplied with fresh meat and vegetables, milk, eggs, and homely but well-cooked dishes, offered a striking contrast to most of those at which the gold-seekers of '49 were compelled to satisfy their hunger, and from it the McClellans were already reaping a rich and well-deserved reward.

Mr. McClellan was a warm friend of Thurston, who had been of material assistance to him when he first reached the country, exhausted by his weary journey across the plains, deserts, and vast mountain ranges

beyond which lay his old home, and he now gave the big miner a most cordial greeting.

"It's good to see you again, Thirsty," he exclaimed, "though till yesterday I thought you was in the States, and was surprised enough to hear you was still in these diggings. But come in, old man! Come in! Mother and the gals will be proper glad to say 'howdy' to you and to any gent that comes as your friend."

But Thurston stood where he was. "Who told you I was coming?" he demanded.

"Why, let me see! Oh, yes! It was a couple of men that hung round here yesterday—a long chap and a short one. I didn't know 'em, but they said they was friends of yourn, and asked if you'd passed along this way. When I said I knowed you hadn't, because you wouldn't on no account give me the go-by, they seemed mighty put out. Said 'twas a great disappointment to them not to see you, but they couldn't wait. They thought maybe they'd meet up with you somewheres along Coloma way, where they was going."

"Did you ask their names?" inquired Thurston.

"Well, now, Thirsty, that's a pretty question for an old hand like you to ask of a man who's been in this country nigh onto a year! Put it to your own self if you'd ask any gent's name in the diggings onless you was aching for a quarrel with him or hankering for a taste of lead."

"Right you are!" replied Thurston, "and I didn't ought to put any such question, for which I begs your pardon. I'd powerfully like to know, though, what the long chap you mentions, likewise the short chap, was

called in the States. Never mind," he added cheerfully, "p'raps I'll meet up with them, as they said; and now, if you're agreeable, we'll step inside the ranch and pay our respects to the ladies."

Before he retired that night Linn's partner had opened negotiations with a horse trader who promised to have a number of animals driven in to the corral for their inspection the first thing in the morning.

As the two partners strolled through the camps outside the fort that evening, they almost ran into a large, coarse-featured man, who hesitated a moment at sight of Thurston, and then held out his hand in greeting. With a deep scowl on his face and a muttered curse, the latter hurried on without paying the slightest attention to him or his outstretched hand.

Halstead was astonished. He had never before seen his friend treat a human being rudely, and was most curious to learn the cause of his conduct in the present instance.

"What's the matter, partner?" he asked. "Don't you know the man?"

"Don't I know him!" answered the other almost fiercely. "Yes, I know him, and I wish I'd put a bullet through his miserable hide the first time ever I set eyes on him instead of helping save his life, as I did. Why, pard, that's Keysburg."

Seeing by the blank expression on Halstead's face that the name conveyed no idea to him, Thurston continued:

"Yes, that there coyote is Keysburg the cannibal. He came out with a party overland in '46 that got snowed

up in the mountains. When the rest of the men that were able came on ahead for help, he pretended to be too feeble to move, and stayed behind. Then he began to live off the bodies of them as had been froze to death. After awhile he got to killing the women and children for the sake of eating 'em—that is, everything seems to point that way, though we never could prove it against him. If we could, he'd been sent to cannibals' hell long ago. A party of us went out from this very fort, and when we found the 'Camp of Death,' as they'd named it, only this skunk was alive. There was dead bodies all around, with pieces hacked off of 'em, and he was boiling human flesh in a kettle, while the frozen carcass of a steer lay untouched in the snow alongside of him. The boys allowed he was crazy and didn't know what he was doing, or we'd strung him up then and there and shot him full of daylight. That's who Keysburg is, and if he ever dares hold out his hand to me again one of us will have a claim on a six-foot hole in the ground. The cuss'll have to draw mighty sudden, too, or it won't be me."

To say that Halstead was shocked at this recital would not begin to express the feeling of loathing and disgust that he felt toward the man, and the next time he saw him he made a wide circuit to avoid a meeting.

Bright and early the following morning Thurston and Halstead visited the corral in which the trader had promised to have the horses ready for their inspection. Early as they were, the horses and mules that they wished to examine were already on hand, but the trader was nowhere to be found.

After waiting half an hour for him they became very impatient, and were about to look up somebody else who had animals for sale, when, from out of a cloud of dust, their man dashed up on a mustang covered with sweat and foam. Its flanks were bloody from the cruel Mexican spurs that had been mercilessly used, and the animal showed every sign of having been ridden hard and far. Behind the trader, on a second mustang that had evidently been just as hard pressed as the first, rode an Indian vaquero, wearing a gay Spanish serape, and leading a young sorrel mare, whose delicate beauty at once excited the admiration of our friends. She was saddled, and also showed signs of hard usage, but she was not nearly so exhausted as her companion steeds, and looked able to travel many miles more without stopping.

"Sorry to hev kep yer waiting, gentlemen," apologized the trader, dismounting and tossing his bridle rein to an Indian lad who stood near, "but I had a bit of important business sprung on me rather sudden last night, and it had to be 'tended to in a hurry."

"Hoss thief?" suggested Thurston inquiringly.

"Nothing less," answered the trader. "And as he took the best one in the whole *caballada*, I was naturally 'bliged to trail him. I reckoned he'd make for the ford jest above Leidesdorff's, but I'd never caught him so easy as I did, if Injun John here hadn't knowed a cut-off we could make by swimmin'. By well-nigh killin' the critters, we kim to the ford about two minutes ahead of the greaser, for he war a greaser, and was lying low in

the bushes jest beyond whar he kim ridin' up out of it smokin' a cigareet."

"Good enough," said the big miner, with a nod of approval.

"We kim back a-kitin'," continued the trader, "hopin' not to keep you men a-waitin', but the hosses was pretty tight druv, and you kin understand how it was."

Thurston nodded again as though in acceptance of the apology, and at once began to talk of the business that had brought them there. It was to purchase two saddle-horses and a couple of pack-mules, if the trader had animals that suited, and they could agree as to terms.

"But," interrupted Halstead, who had been greatly interested in the incident of the horse-stealing, "what became of the thief? You didn't let him go, did you?" The trader looked at the young man for a moment, with an air of mingled surprise and pity, and then, without a word, significantly touched the pistol that hung in a holster from his belt.

"Does he mean that he shot him?" asked Linn in a low voice, turning to Thurston.

"To be certainly, pard. Having the drop on him, as he says he did, of course he shot him. Why not?" answered the big miner, coolly. "Hoss thieves is pizen in this country, and the man who wouldn't drop one of 'em on sight, 'specially if he was a greaser, would likely get into trouble."

Halstead said nothing more upon the subject at the time, but he could not help, both then and afterward, regarding this summary dealing out of justice according

to the generally accepted, though unwritten law of the diggings, with a feeling of horror.

For the present he tried to dismiss from his mind the new ideas that had been awakened by what he had just heard, and to take an interest in the transactions under discussion. He had, at first sight, conceived an immense fancy for the dainty sorrel mare that had just been recovered from the horse thief and now urged her purchase.

The trader was not inclined to part with this particular animal, declaring that he valued her more than any three that he owned. Finally, tempted by an offer of $1000, he let her go, and at that price she passed into the hands of our friends, and was thereafter regarded as the especial property of Linn Halstead. Her name was Fanita, and between her and her new owner there soon sprang up that warm attachment invariably existing between rider and horse who thoroughly understand, trust, and appreciate each other.

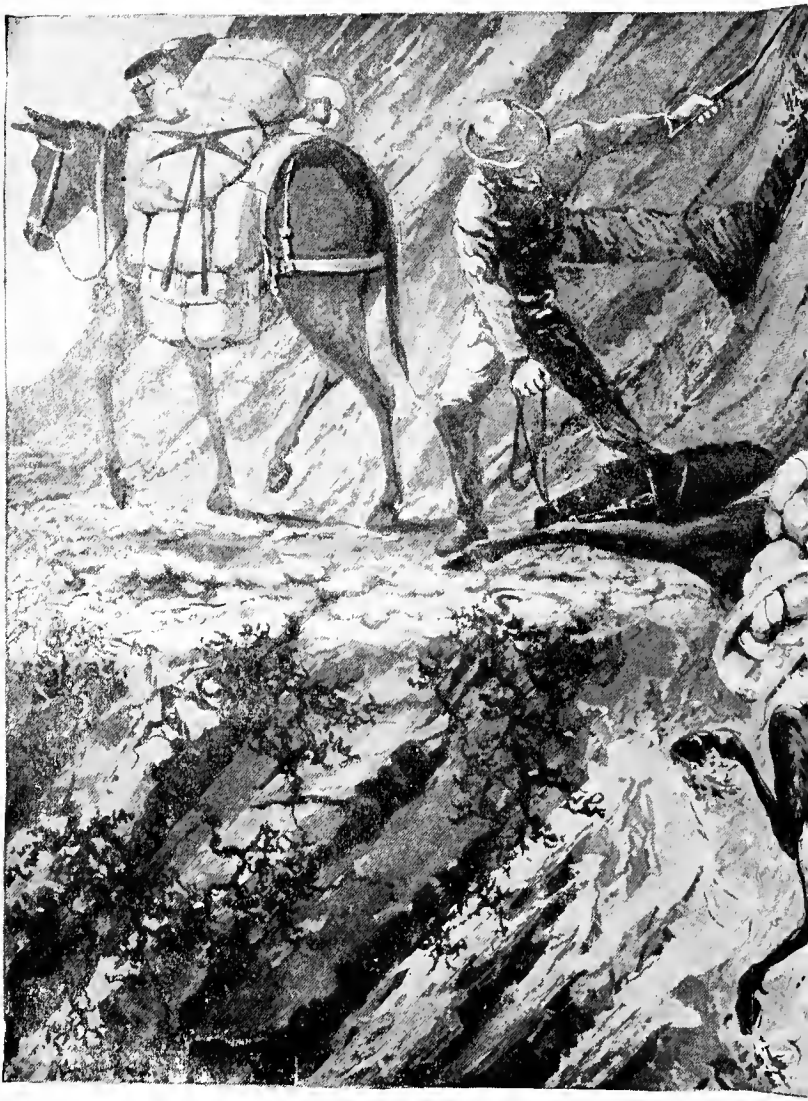
For his own riding Thurston selected a wiry mustang, with the look of a devil in his eye ; and, for pack-animals, they purchased two small but well-conditioned mules. The price of the four animals, including saddles, bridles, and hair lariats, was $2000. This was not at all exorbitant for those days, though it seemed so to Linn, as he weighed it out from the partnership dust-bag with the keeping of which he was intrusted.

An hour later, Fanita, having been carefully rubbed down, fed and watered, was again ready to take the road. The two mules were packed, and all was prepared

for the start on what Thurston told his friend McClellan was a little prospecting trip into the mountains.

One of the mules carried two hundred pounds of provisions, for this load would be lightened daily, and would weigh considerably less by the time they reached the more rugged portion of the mountains for which they were bound. Among these provisions were flour, bacon, coffee, sugar, salt and ship biscuit. The other mule bore a pack weighing about one hundred and fifty pounds, and containing a small tent, a pick, shovel, axe, iron prospecting pan, a few tools taken from the chest that was to be left behind with the McClellans, a modest outfit of cooking utensils, and a change or two of clothing. Each of the horsemen carried on his person, or attached to his saddle, a rifle, revolver, knife, poncho or heavy blanket with a slit in the middle through which the head can be thrust, a moderate supply of ammunition, and a horsehair lariat.

Thus equipped, and followed by the hearty good wishes of the McClellans, the two partners left Sutter's Fort about nine o'clock and, each leading one of the pack-mules, turned their faces toward the white-topped mountains that bounded the distant eastern horizon.



Golden Days.—Pages 102–103.

THE MULE TRAI

E TRAIN.

CHAPTER X.

GOLD DIGGINGS AND DIGGERS.

Blue Tent.—Camp-Fire Tales.—The Astonished Sheriff and the Wise Alcalde.—A Verdict in Accordance with the Sentence.—Bad Man's Bar.—Placer-Mining.—Pans, Cradles, and Flumes.—Wet and Dry Diggings.

THE trail across the prairie along which the partners rode was plain, broad, and deeply rutted by the heavy freight wagons that were constantly passing over it to and from the diggings. It was also occupied by parties of adventurers trudging sturdily along with picks, packs and pans slung over their shoulders, and by an almost equal number of diggers returning from the mines. Some of these had left because they had been successful and were satisfied with their piles of dust, and others because they had been unsuccessful and had nothing to show for their months of toil and privation. Many more were returning because of illness that forbade further work. These were suffering with scurvy, fevers, malaria in all its forms, or with acute rheumatism contracted during many days of work in the icy water of mountain streams. Their accounts of the state of affairs in the diggings were encouraging or disheartening according to their individual fortunes.

A two hours' ride brought our travellers to Sinclair's old ranch, now occupied by a family named Kelly. Here

they rested for an hour and got dinner. That night they camped near the log hotel and bar-room, that rejoiced in the name of "Blue Tent," because the first occupant of the site had been sheltered by canvas of that color. It was at that time one of the best-known and most popular stopping-places on the road to the mines, and among those who claimed its hospitality that night were several men with whom Thurston was acquainted. These spent the whole evening around his little camp fire, exchanging reminiscences of thrilling events, and telling stories of life in the diggings that proved most entertaining to Linn Halstead.

Several of these stories were related of an alcalde, recently elected at a camp on the South Fork, and served to illustrate the manner in which order was maintained in this wild region, in which the only existing laws were such as the miners made for themselves. It was the common practice for the first dozen claimants of a new discovery to elect one of their number alcalde, or chief magistrate, by whom conflicting claims should be adjusted and disputes settled. Having elected him, it became a point of honor among them to support him in all his decisions, no matter how unjust they might appear.

According to the stories related around the camp fire that evening, the first case brought before the alcalde in question was one in which two men owning neighboring claims accused each other of trespass. After hearing all the evidence on both sides, the alcalde, assuming his glasses and most judicial aspect, announced that both parties were in the wrong, ordered each to pay the other

fifty dollars damages, and decided that the sheriff must pay the costs of the trial. In vain did that astonished official protest against such an extraordinary and unheard-of ruling. The alcalde had pronounced judgment, and even the sheriff was obliged to submit to it.

Upon another occasion two Mexicans quarrelled over the ownership of a mule, and submitted their case to the alcalde for settlement. As a preliminary he ordered each of them to hand him two ounces of gold to defray the costs of the trial. Then he allowed them to talk until they were entirely out of breath. Both at once, with fierce gesticulations, they told their story. The alcalde listened patiently, but, having no knowledge of their language, he, of course, gained no idea of the merits of the case from what they said. When they became silent from exhaustion, he declared that each of them had defined his position so clearly as to leave the court in doubt whether either of them owned the mule. He therefore ordered that they should decide the question by the drawing of straws.

Sometimes, in important and difficult cases, the alcaldes summoned juries to their assistance. This alcalde had occasion to do so in the trial of a notorious horse thief. After listening to evidence for a whole morning, the jury retired. They remained out for a long time, during which the spectators of the trial, fully convinced of the prisoner's guilt, and impatient of the law's delay, hung him to a tree just outside the court-house. Finally the jury came in, and, not knowing what had happened, announced that they could not agree.

Upon this the alcalde ordered them back to their room, remarking significantly: "The good name of this camp, gentlemen, demands that you agree, and that as quickly as possible. It does not, however, insist upon a verdict of acquittal." Without leaving their seats, the jury, realizing that the alcalde meant business, returned a unanimous verdict of "guilty."

A few miles beyond Blue Tent the trail to be followed by the two partners left the more travelled road to the South Fork and continued up the main stream of the Rio Americano. The waters in the river, fed by melting snows in the mountains, were cold as ice and as clear as crystal, while the country through which they flowed was glorified by the first flush of summer. The prairie was now left for the foot-hills, and pines began to mingle with the live oaks, bays, madronos and thickets of red-stemmed manzanita. The oak openings, free from underbrush, and carpeted with greensward, resembled extensive orchards or well-kept parks. The music of birds was heard on all sides, coveys of plumed California quail scurried across the road, barely escaping the horses' feet, deer-tracks were as plentiful as those of cattle in a stock country, and hardly an hour passed but what Halstead had his attention directed to the sprawling imprint in the dust of "Old Ephraim," the grizzly. Coyotes barked and snarled about their camps at night, and occasionally their horses snorted with terror at the fearful, long-drawn howl of the great mountain wolf.

When they were two days out from Sutter's Fort they noted evidences of recent prospecting in freshly upturned

heaps of red earth along the gulches and arroyos across which their road lay. These increased in number and extent, until, shortly before noon, they came to the settlement of Bad Man's Bar, where, for the first time in his life, Linn Halstead saw a gold-mining camp in full operation. He had reached the diggings and was really treading golden soil. The very thought was fascinating, and, as he and his companion rode down the steep side of the valley toward the cluster of log huts, shanties, and tents that formed the camp, he asked eagerly if they could not stay here for awhile and try their luck.

"To be certainly, pard, if you want to, but I wouldn't advise you to linger any longer than you can help in a played-out gulch like this, while our prospects ahead is panning out the show of color they is," answered Thurston.

Halstead's judgment at once convinced him that his companion was right, and that, for their own best interests, they should hurry along. At the same time he was much pleased with Thurston's proposition that they should rest there for an hour or so, and get dinner.

The treasures of Bad Man's Bar had only been discovered late the year before, and in a few weeks many thousand dollars' worth of gold had been taken from it. The diggings were, however, only fairly begun when the rainy season set in, and work was partially suspended until the high waters in the creek on which the camp was located should again subside. As its sources did not lie among the snows of the higher mountains, it was now rapidly falling, and work on the exposed bars or placers

was in such busy progress that, to Halstead's unaccustomed eyes, the scene presented was one of great and novel activity.

He saw numbers of fierce-looking men with untrimmed beards and hair hanging over their shoulders, or, if cut, presenting the appearance of having been operated upon with a jack-knife. They waded in the cold waters of the stream, solemnly rocked cradles on the bank, popped their heads out of holes in the ground that made a little patch of level bottom-land look like a town of gigantic prairie dogs, or delved with pick, crowbar and shovel on the hill-sides. All were wet and muddy, and most of them were clad in garments so tattered, patched, and disreputable that any self-respecting scarecrow would have scorned them. The mid-day sun beat down upon their heads with an intense heat, and was reflected from the water in which they worked with a blinding glare. The most curious feature of all was the rarely-broken silence in which they labored. Each man seemed too intent upon his own affairs to have a moment's time to devote to those of his neighbor, and whether employed with pick, shovel, cradle or pan, he seldom looked up from his task or spoke.

Nearly every operation required almost constant stooping, that occasionally demanded the relief of rising into an erect position with a stretch and a prodigious yawn. Every now and then a digger's eyes would glisten and his breath would come quicker than before. He would seem to be on the point of uttering an exclamation of pleasure, or of announcing to those about him his find of

an unusual quantity of dust at the bottom of his pan, or the discovery of a large nugget in his rocker, but the impulse was always checked. An instant's reflection would cause him to glance furtively about with the hope that his good luck had not been noticed. Then he would hastily transfer the newly-acquired wealth to his dust-bag, and renew his search with an increased eagerness.

The one principle underlying all the operations of placer-mining, or surface-digging for gold, is the great weight of the precious metal, that causes it to find its way to the bottom of almost any material with which it is mixed. Thus, when it is brought down from its native hill-sides by the force of rushing streams, it moves with the very lowest drift of the earth, sand or gravel accompanying it, and lodges in crevices of the bed-rock. So, in working the bars of a river, the upper layers of material must first be removed before "pay dirt" can be reached. In washing with a pan, or "panning out gold," an ordinary hand-basin of tin or wood, or a shallow iron pan constructed especially for the purpose, is used. It is filled with what is supposed to be rich dirt. one edge is held just under the water, and it is shaken quickly back and forth with a semi-rotary motion. In a minute or so all the contents are washed away except a deposit of black sand containing the glistening scales or particles of gold. This deposit is dried, and the black sand, which is almost wholly iron, is blown away or drawn from about the gold with a magnet. This is the simplest form of gold-mining, and the pan, being almost indispensable in pros-

pecting or searching for gold in new localities, forms an important feature of every miner's outfit.

Next to the pan in simplicity and usefulness comes the miner's cradle, which, however, requires two men for its operation, one to bring the gold-bearing earth to it, and the other to rock it and supply it with water. In form it is very similar to the ordinary low cradles in which babies are rocked, but it is provided with a few wooden cleats, nailed crosswise of the bottom inside, a grating of small bars laid across the upper end, a straight wooden handle nailed to the head-board by which it may be kept in motion, and a hole cut in the foot-board to allow the water and waste material to pass out. While one man shovels dirt on to the grating, which is fine enough to prevent stones of any size from falling through, his partner, squatted down beside the machine or bending over it, rocks it with one hand, while with the other he pours water over the dirt on the grating. The end of the cradle farthest from the grating is somewhat lower than the other, and the stream of water, constantly agitated by the motion of the machine, acts precisely the part of a miniature river, depositing the heavy golden particles against the cleats or "riffles" on the bottom, and sweeping away all other material.

The "Long Tom," which was just coming into general use at that time, is but a stationary cradle on a large scale. It is simply a long trough ending in a "riffle box," through which flows a constant stream of water, and into which a number of men may shovel dirt.

In '49 the most extensive operations were conducted

Golden Days.—Pages 110–111.

WASHING F

GOLD.

by companies of miners, who banded together and built "flumes" of timber at one side or the other of a river. Through these its entire volume might be made to flow for short distances, leaving the "pockets" and other places of deposit, in its original bed, exposed to the eager search of the flume builders. These flumes were very expensive, requiring months of labor as well as large gangs of men for their construction, and were generally swept away by the first rise of water in the rainy season. At the same time they were very remunerative, and in rich localities thousands of dollars' worth of gold were often taken in a single day from the river bed, after its waters had been thus diverted. On the other hand, it sometimes happened that, after working on a flume for an entire season, the unlucky builders found their portion of the exposed river bed to be entirely barren of the precious metal.

The wet, or placer diggings, were those in, or in the immediate vicinity of, flowing streams, while the dry diggings were those of hill-sides, or in gulches containing no steady supply of water. Here the material was first loosened by picks or crowbars, and then carried in buckets, baskets or other receptacles, to the nearest water for washing. In some very dry diggings, worked chiefly by Mexicans, Chinamen or other patient toilers, the loosened earth was tossed in blankets, until, in the form of dust, it was blown away by the wind, while the heavier gold remained.

Between the very wet and the very dry diggings came the "coyote holes." These were generally sunk in

bottom lands formed, during long ages, by the deposits of some running stream. As gold could only be found in the clay, beneath the lighter earth of these areas, the miner, instead of attempting to remove the whole top layer of his claim, sunk a small shaft to the clay, and then burrowed about on all sides until he began to encroach upon the claims of his neighbors. In the clay he was at any moment likely to strike "bullets," lumps, nuggets, or pockets of pure gold; and many a fortune found its way to the light of the sun through a coyote hole in the golden days of '49.

With such primitive appliances and methods did the early Californian gold-miners skim the cream of the surface diggings, but they left behind more than they carried away. It remained for the modern quartz mills, amalgamators, and hydraulic engines to disclose the real treasure houses of the gold region and rifle them of their glittering wealth.

Still, what he saw accomplished by the earth-grimed workers of Bad Man's Bar was sufficient to excite Linn Halstead's enthusiasm to its highest pitch, and he longed for the time when he, too, might dig gold from the red earth that seemed to yield it so freely.

CHAPTER XI.

BEYOND THE SETTLEMENTS.

Dinner at Bad Man's Bar.—Mr. Royal Bowers Introduces Himself.—An Undesirable Travelling Companion.—Pursuing Horsemen.—Are they Indians?—Shooting Redskins for Fun.—A Rancheria.—Information Wanted Regarding the Val d'Oro.—Disappearance of Mr. Bowers.

SOON after the arrival of the partners at Bad Man's Bar, a clanging bell from the log shanty that contained beneath its roof the principal bar-room and only hotel in the camp announced the noon hour and dinner-time. Tools were dropped at the sound, as though they burned the hands that wielded them, and instantly there was a stampede toward the hotel, boarding-houses, and the cabins whose occupants "found themselves in grub," of dripping and mud-bespattered miners. As they did not care to unpack their mules and attempt to prepare a meal for themselves at that time, our prospectors gained access to the hotel table by paying three dollars each, and joined in the rush for seats.

For a moment Halstead sat motionless with astonishment at the scene presented by that dining-table. With the next instant, perceiving that he was about to "get left," he followed the example of those about him, including Thurston, and reached for the nearest dish, the contents of which he transferred to his plate. They proved to be onions, and, as everything else had been swept

away, Linn would have been compelled to make his dinner from them, or to have gone hungry, had it not been for the superior skill and activity of his partner. He had secured a fried beefsteak, as tough as leather, and swimming in grease, a dish of watery potatoes, and another of "soft bread," so called to distinguish it from the "hard tack," or ship biscuit more common in the diggings. All of these he divided with Halstead in exchange for a portion of his onions, and from this coarse, ill-cooked fare, seasoned with the exquisite sauce of ravenous appetites, they made a most hearty and satisfactory meal.

The rapidity with which the regular patrons of the hotel bolted their food and finished the meal would have been amusing had it not been disgusting. Most of them had left the table before Halstead had fairly begun his dinner.

An impatient voice at his ear shouted, "Tea or coffee?" Before he could answer, the tin cup beside his plate was filled with a black decoction of one or the other, he knew not which, and his neighbor, who had shouted "Coffee!" the moment he heard the waiter speak to Halstead, was being served. At the same time, the man beyond him was making his wants known so that no time might be lost.

"Oh, yes," remarked Thurston, who was keenly enjoying his partner's surprise. "It beats railroading, and all the lightning express eating-houses in the States would get left so quick as would make 'em dizzy, in a race with one of these here Californy shebangs. You must remem-

ber, pard, that time means ducats in the diggings, and daylight's too all-fired valuable to be wasted over any fancy notions of victualling up."

In less than half an hour from the first clang of the dinner-bell that important meal had been disposed of, and the various mining operations of the camp were being pursued as actively as though no interruption had occurred.

In the mean time, Fanita, "Kangaroot," as Thurston had named his mustang, because he was such a jumper, and the mules, had been provided with four quarts of shelled corn, for which their masters had paid four dollars, and had also been given an armful of wheat straw. While they were eating their mid-day meal, much more deliberately than the human animals of the camp had theirs, Halstead and Thurston, tilted back in arm-chairs in the bar-room, waited for them to finish it. With them sat and talked a stranger who, with the usual freedom of such a place, had entered into conversation with them without the formality of an introduction.

This man's dress and appearance bore out his claim to have been in the diggings for some months, and he laid himself out to produce a favorable impression upon our friends. Without making any inquiries as to their business or destination, he seemed to take it for granted that they were prospectors. Acting upon this supposition, he informed them that he, too, was taking a little turn through the mountains to see if he could not find something in their unexplored valleys better than had yet been discovered.

When they were ready to resume their journey, they found their acquaintance of the bar-room also in the act of mounting his horse. Seeing them, he proposed that, so long as they seemed to be headed in the same direction as himself, they should travel in company until their paths separated.

"They say the Injuns is bad, a bit further on," he remarked, "and I confess to a liking for white company whenever there's a chance of meeting up with the red devils. Not that Royal Bowers, which is the proper label of yours truly, though sometimes called by his friend 'Right Bower,' and also 'Jack of Spades,' is afeared to meet 'em single-handed. Oh, no, gents, this hómbre has had many a brush with the varmints, and when he goes for 'em heeled, they takes to their holes. Still, as I was saying, if you're agreeable, why so be I, and we'll jine in a little three-handed game, from which any one, not liking the deal, is free to pull out at any time."

Although neither Halstead nor Thurston particularly fancied this man's appearance or manner, they could not, at the moment, frame a reasonable excuse for refusing his company, and so, when they left Bad Man's Bar, he rode with them.

Mr. Bowers was an able talker, there was no doubt of that, or that he delighted in the sound of his own voice. Still, many of his stories were new, and all of them garnished with the quaint slang of the diggings, that seemed, like the army of Cadmus, to have sprung into existence completely equipped to meet the exigencies of the times.

greatly interested Linn Halstead. Thurston did not respond so readily to the stranger's advances as did his partner, and watched him keenly but furtively.

Their road no longer followed the river closely, but was frequently cut off from it by precipitous banks that necessitated long détours, steep climbs over mountain spurs, and scrambling descents into deep valleys. From some of the elevations thus attained they could look back over the whole extent of the Sacramento Valley, stretching away in a vast, unbroken sweep from their feet to the western blue of its farther boundary, the mountains of the Coast Range. Like a broad ribbon of light, its great river, sometimes hidden by dark forest belts, and again flashing across an open prairie, wound in graceful curves, until it was merged in a wider space of light that they knew must be the waters of the bay.

On the second day from Bad Man's Bar, they had left all traces of wagon-tracks, nor had they met or passed any other travellers since leaving that place. Therefore, when Halstead, who had lingered behind for one more look from a commanding eminence at the panorama outspread below him, hurried up, and reported that he had caught a glimpse of horsemen following them, though at a great distance, there was some speculation as to who they might be.

"Injuns, perhaps," remarked Thurston, with a significant glance at the stranger. "What do you say to stopping and having a look at 'em?"

"I don't believe it would pay," objected Mr. Bowers. "They might think we was Oregon ducks, and go for

us. Then we'd naturally have to clean 'em out, and I'm that tender-hearted that I don't hanker after killing no human, not even an Injun, unless I'm riled to it."

Mr. Bowers's allusion to "Oregon ducks" referred to the bitter hostility existing between the arrivals from that territory, and the native Indians. Most of the Oregonians, having crossed the plains and suffered from the depredations of the tribes encountered on the way, had sworn the extermination of such Indians as dwelt in the neighborhood of their new homes, and had waged cruel and relentless war upon them. So accustomed had they become to shooting an Indian at sight, that, when they came among the peaceful natives of California, many of whom were in the employ of white men, they placed no restraint upon their murderous impulses, but shot them down without provocation. The Indians retaliated, and several of the aggressors were in turn killed and scalped. At this the fury of the Oregon men knew no bounds. It had been fun to shoot an Indian, and burn his miserable rancheria before, now it was regarded as a duty, and woe to the luckless native, however innocent of evil intention he might be, who came within range of the long rifles from the north.

The feeling thus roused by the Oregonians, and shared by most of the emigrants who had crossed the plains, soon became widespread among the miners. No more attention was paid to the shooting of an "Injun" than if he were a coyote, and the indiscriminate butcheries of men, women, and children, that occurred whenever, for sport or policy, it seemed desirable to "wipe out" a

rancheria, stand to-day the foulest stains upon the shield of California.

Not long after the sighting of the pursuing horsemen, as the three prospectors descended to a small, oak-covered flat that looked out on the river, Thurston suddenly exclaimed, "There's Injuns, now, sure enough!"

What he saw was a small group of round-topped huts, built of branches and rushes deftly woven together, almost hidden among the trees, close to the river bank. As they rode toward this rancheria (pronounced ranch-a-ree), which is the term applied to all Indian villages on the Pacific slope, it was noticed that Mr. Bowers kept well in the rear of his companions, perhaps that his presence might not terrify the natives too greatly. He maintained that position until the huts were reached, and found to be in possession of a few women and children, the men all being away salmon-fishing. Then he came boldly forward, and suggested that it might be as well to "clean out the whole outfit," remarking that "the varmints hadn't no business occupying white men's diggings nohow, also that the cubs would grow up to be troublesome before long, and that when it came to shooting, the squaws was just as bad as the bucks."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, sir!" cried Linn Halstead, with a sudden burst of anger, "to talk of murdering helpless human beings, who have never done you any harm, as coolly as you would speak of destroying a nest of snakes."

"Oh, well," replied Mr. Bowers, "Injuns is about the same ez snakes anyhow; but of course I was only

joking. I wouldn't tetch one of the critters with a ten-foot pole—that is, always supposin' I warn't riled."

Although the squaws were much frightened by the appearance of the white men, Thurston finally succeeded in quieting their apprehensions, and in purchasing from them a fine fresh salmon of which they had a number.

While his partner was negotiating for the fish, Halstead curiously examined the huts and their surroundings. Standing outside of them he noticed a number of immense baskets, each capable of holding several bushels, that were partially filled with acorns. He also saw a large flat rock, with a number of holes, beside each of which was a smooth stone, worn on its surface. Thurston told him that the acorns formed the principal article of food of the Indians in that country, and that, after being roasted, they were ground to a coarse meal in the holes of the flat rock, which was called by the miners an "Indian windmill." Besides the acorns, and salmon, in the spawning season, when the fish ran far up the rivers from the sea, their diet consisted of seeds, roots, grass, locusts, lizards, and such small game as they could snare, or shoot with bows and arrows.

Camp was made that night about two miles beyond the rancheria, in a small valley through which a brook ran merrily down to the river. Here, after supper, as the three men sat around the fire in front of the little tent, their conversation turned from Indians and their ways to gold-digging, and they speculated upon the amount of gold that would yet be found in that region. Mr. Bowers was inclined to think it would be discovered in such quantities

as would rapidly depreciate its value, and was impatient to secure his pile and exchange it for other forms of property, before that time should come.

Thurston took another view of the subject, and declared, guardedly, that he did not believe there was such an almighty sight of gold in the country anyhow, and whatever of it he got hold of, he should freeze onto, as being about as safe as any kind of property a man could own.

In attempting to prove his theory, Mr. Bowers became quite excited, and finally exclaimed :

"Why, gentle*men*, didn't you never hear tell of the Golden Valley that's located somewheres in these here mountings?"

"What about it?" asked Thurston.

"What about it! Why, nothing at all, only it's just paved with solid gold, and there's so much of it that all the miners in Californy, nor that ever will be here, couldn't pack it away. I tell you, gentlemen, the prospector that first tumbles to that ar valley, and sights the dazzle of its wealth, won't need to ask no odds of the King of all the Injuns, for he'll be the best fixed galoot in this little old round world."

By his reference, Mr. Bowers probably meant the King of all the Indies, always supposing there was such a personage.

"Where is this here valley?" asked Thurston, innocently.

"Whar is it, do you say? Wal, ef I knowed do you think I'd be a-settin' here, like a hen atop of duck-eggs?

That's the question what's a-puzzling the crowned heads of Yurrup, not to say the free and independent citizens of this country, at this perticular time o' day. Nobody knows the precise spot in which she are planted, but there's plenty ez hez their suspicions. To tell the honest, hard-pan truth, gentlemen, I was in hopes, on first meeting up with you, that you was bound for the valley yourselves, and wouldn't mind letting a pore man help himself to the leavings after you'd staked out your claims. Howsomever, as you never heerd tell of the place, which is mighty curious, I don't reckin you could even point out the trail leading away from it."

"'Tain't onlikely," answered Thurston, "seeing as you are the first man in the country to mention the subject to me and my pard. Now, as you states the facts so clear, and describes the diggings so plain, maybe we'll take a *pasear* that way some day, when we hain't nothing better to do. And, stranger," he added, earnestly, "whenever we strike the lead of that there 'dazzle' you was telling about, we'll send you word by telegraft, and wait till you jine us."

"You do me proud," rejoined Mr. Bowers, "and I looks toward you through the bottom of the tumbler. Also, nothing in life would give yours truly greater pleasure than to assist gents like you to scoop in the nuggets from the Golden Valley, when you takes a notion to look it up."

Linn Halstead was at first puzzled, as he listened to the foregoing conversation, to discover its meaning, but he soon perceived that each of the men was trying to

obtain some information from the other without giving any in return. As his partner afterward expressed it:

"We was playing a bluff game, and standing on the deal. Nary one of us dast to discard, nor yet draw, being scared that the other might size up his hand. But I held over him, pard, and I believe he know'd it, or he wouldn't have weakened so sudden, like he did."

This remark was made the following morning, when, upon crawling out of their tent, our friends discovered that Mr. Bowers, who had slept outside near the camp fire, was nowhere to be seen. As his horse was also gone, they concluded that he had become tired of their company, and had decided to continue his prospecting trip alone.

They talked of him as they prepared and ate their simple breakfast, agreed that there was something suspicious about the man, and told each other that if he had not thus taken himself off, they would have been obliged, upon one excuse or another, to get rid of him before going much farther.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUR ACES AND A ROYAL FLUSH.

"We're Ruined, Pard."—Loss of the Parchment Tracing.—"What Beats Four Aces?"—Hope Restored.—The Partners Still Hold Winning Cards.—Kangaroot Points Out an Imminent Danger.—Discovery of the Sign.—Throwing Pursuers Off the Trail.—Recognizing Old Enemies.

WHILE Halstead was taking down the tent, and rolling up the blankets, that morning, he heard a sudden exclamation of dismay from Thurston, who had started to bring in the animals from the place where they were feeding.

Looking up, he saw his partner walking hastily toward him, holding out what appeared to be a garment of some kind.

"We're ruined, pard! We are teetotally ruined! The bank's bursted, and the game is up!" exclaimed Thurston, as he drew near and held up what Linn now saw was the other's own coat.

"I picked up this here jacket out there in the bushes," continued Thurston, "where that blamed cuss flung it after he'd gone through the pockets like a dose of salts. And, pard, he has moseyed with the map, and we're up a flume. There ain't no use of following him neither, through these mountains, 'cause we couldn't trail him without Injuns, and even then 'tisn't likely we'd ever catch up with him. I'm afraid he's got too big a lead on

us. It's all my own blamed, lunk-headed fault, too, for, if I'd took as good care of that map as I did of my own scalp, which I orter have done, we'd been all hunky at this minute, and R. Bowers would have got left. But, pard, I'll make it up to you somehow, and both of them 'Frisco lots is yours from this time on."

Here the honest fellow's voice trembled, as he thought of the injury his carelessness had inflicted upon the partner whom he had learned to love, and of his own bitter disappointment. To be sure, they might prospect any of the numerous gulches around them, with a fair chance of striking gold in paying quantities. They would, however, have to work long and hard before securing such an amount, as, from all accounts, they could gather in a few days from the treasures of the Golden Valley. Those were now lost to them forever, Thurston thought, bitterly, for without the map that was to have guided them to it, there was no use in continuing the search. They might wander among the thousands of hidden valleys, and desolate, wind-swept spaces of that vast mountain range, until they were gray-headed, without finding it, or they might come across it and never suspect that it was the Val d'Oro; for Thurston knew better than to imagine there would be anything in its appearance to indicate the existence of the yellow wealth beneath its sods.

All these thoughts passed through the big miner's brain, as he sat on a log in a dejected attitude, with his face buried in his hands, trying to master his disappointment. Now that it was no longer possible to do so, he

realized that to find the Golden Valley had become the one all-absorbing desire of his life. He hardly noticed that his partner in misfortune had not spoken since the announcement of their loss, nor uttered a word of either reproach or consolation, until Halstead asked, without any apparent relevance :

"Thirsty, what beats four aces?"

"Nothing that I know of," replied the miner, looking up in great surprise at the question. "Onless," he added, reflectively, "it might be a Royal Flush. But what makes you ask, pard?"

"Why, because, while Bowers has got that map without knowing anything about the point on the river from which it starts, he may think he holds four aces, and that they can't be beaten. Now, we know the starting-point, and, with this copy of the map in addition to that information, it looks to me as though we held a Royal Flush, and that the game was ours after all."

Here the young man held out a small breast-pocket note-book, on one page of which was a faithful copy of the lost map, that he had made, for want of something better to do, on the steamer, while coming up the coast from Panama.

The change in Thurston's appearance and manner, wrought by these few words, and the sight of those pencilled lines, was marvellous. He sprang to his feet, and throwing his arms about his partner, gave him a hug that a grizzly might have envied, as he exclaimed :

"Pard, you're the bulliest kind of a trump that ever was led for a man to follow! You're a circus with

three rings! Do we hold over Bowers? You may just bet your sweet life we do! Have we got him where the wool's all wore off the top of his head? Oh, little old Lizy Jane, and all the gals! Never mind me, pard. I'm a brass band, and I've got to toot. Hooray for Andy Jackson!"

Halstead laughed until he was sore over his partner's antics, and the quaint expression of his great joy.

At last the miner sobered down sufficiently to attend to his interrupted preparations for continuing their journey. He said:

"What we've got to do now, is just to harness up the mules, and be careless how we drive, till we sight the point we know of. Then hooray for the Golden Valley! But we've got to light out mighty sudden, and do some tall travelling to get to the place before 'Mr. Got Left Bowers' and his pals, for I reckon those galoots you sighted yesterday must be pals of his, finds out that they hain't got nothing after all, and tries to snab onto us again."

When they were once more on the road, and making the best speed they could with their heavily-laden pack-animals, Halstead asked his companion how Bowers managed to get hold of the map.

According to Thurston's explanation, it seemed that the precious bit of parchment had been carried in the breast-pocket of his coat, which was generally folded and placed under his head at night, together with his boots, to serve as a pillow, and for safe-keeping. As the previous day had been very warm, and he had no use for the coat

while riding, he had strapped it to the back of his saddle. When they made camp, the saddle, with the coat still attached to it, had been placed just inside the little tent. Sitting by the fire after supper, Thurston had not felt the need of the garment, and, in fact, had not once thought about it, or that which it contained. He remembered that, during the night, he had found his bed too short, and had given the saddle a kick that must have pushed it outside the tent. In that position it was easy enough for Bowers to remove the coat without disturbing the sleepers, especially as he had cut the straps that bound it to the saddle, rather than risk making a noise by unbuckling them.

"What I'm a-trying to figure out," said Thurston, "is how the blamed chump got onto us, and tumbled to our racket anyway. I haven't let on to a living soul what we was after, nor where we was bound. No more do I think have you, and nobody else in the whole world, that I know of, except Don Almiro, knowed a word of it."

"I certainly have not spoken of it," rejoined Halstead, "but then, anybody might have been curious enough to know where we were bound, to follow us, especially if he was only prospecting, and didn't much care where he went. What does puzzle me, though, is how in the world did he know we had that map of the Golden Valley. I don't remember that we've ever even looked at it when there was a soul near enough to see what it was."

"Yes, that's the sticker," replied Thurston, shaking his head; and for some time they rode in silence, each occupied in attempting to fathom the mystery.

The country through which they travelled had been growing wilder and rougher with each mile, until now they seemed to be in the very heart of the mountains, and could no longer obtain glimpses of the smiling lowlands they had left behind. They were rarely able to approach the river that roared and foamed a rushing mountain torrent hundreds of feet below the trail, which frequently led them along precipitous cliffs high above the stream and almost overhanging it. In such places a misstep would have hurled them to certain destruction. The trail itself was but a faint pathway made by moccasined feet of Indians from the eastern deserts, who came over the mountains every spring to spear salmon in the streams of their western slope. The oaks and other deciduous forest trees had disappeared, and they now travelled in the shadow of dark pines, cedars, and redwoods of gigantic size that often towered two hundred feet in the air. Several times on this day's journey they obtained distant glimpses of large bears that they supposed were grizzlies; but the animals always saw them first and were invariably making off when discovered.

Thus far all had gone well with the prospectors, and, as they had expected to meet with many hardships during the journey, they had nothing to complain of. They made all possible speed forward, though on account of the roughness of the way they could not travel more than a mile or so an hour. At last Thurston announced that, judging from Don Almiro's minute description of the country, and especially of the point at which they

were to leave the river, he felt certain they must be very near the place.

As it was about noon, and they just then discovered a spring of cold water bubbling up from among the roots of a great pine tree, they decided, in spite of their haste, to make a short halt, more for the sake of their jaded mules than their own. Several times during the journey Thurston's vicious little mustang had given him trouble in one way or another and he always seemed to be plotting mischief. Upon this occasion, when they were again ready to start, Halstead was already in the saddle, and his partner was about to mount, when Kangaroot gave one of the tremendous side-way jumps that had earned him his name. Thurston stumbled, and in trying to save himself from falling, threw out his hands and let go of the bridle-rein.

The instant the animal found that he was free he wheeled in his tracks and started on a dead run back over the trail by which they had just come. On his swift and sure-footed Fanita, Halstead dashed after the runaway, leaving his companion to attend to the mules, who, in spite of their hard trip, were quite ready to be stampeded, and to run in any direction if only they could get the chance.

The chase only lasted for a mile or so, when the trailing lariat by which the mustang had been tethered, caught around a tree and brought him to the ground with stunning suddenness. He had hardly scrambled to his feet when Fanita reached his side, and Halstead seized his bridle.

At that same moment the young man saw, through a long vista of trees, four horsemen cautiously picking their way along one of the precipitous places far back on the trail that he and Thurston had just travelled.

Linn did not stop for a further observation, but, dismounting from Fanita, he sprang on the mustang's back, as riding him would be the easiest way of getting him along, and, leading his own horse, set out on a lope for the place where they had taken their nooning. He found Thurston anxiously awaiting him, but surprised to see him back so quickly.

"It's a good bit of experience for me, pard," he exclaimed as the other rode up, "and this time it's been come by dirt cheap, which is contrary to the price usually paid for the article."

The miner listened with intense interest to Halstead's account of what he had seen, and declared that the horsemen could be no others than Bowers and his pals, who had discovered the worthlessness of the stolen map without a knowledge of its starting-point, and were now following their trail in the hope of making good this broken link in their chain of information. "But, pard," he continued, "a Royal Flush warn't never dealt out two hands running, and they can't have ours without swapping cards, which old Thirsty T. don't propose to let 'em do. No, sir, not any! But we'll give 'em a chance to travel round some, and to sample the mountain air for all it's worth before we get through with 'em. Git on you, Kangaroot! You did us a good turn by that last caper, but you want to follow it up by jogging along

right peart now, or I'll have to forget your goodness."

All this time the two men had been urging their animals as speedily as possible over the rough trail, and though they knew their pursuers to be unencumbered by pack-mules, they felt certain that they could not be gaining on them very fast.

At length, when the sun was still an hour high, Thurston uttered an exclamation of joy, and directed his partner's attention to a plainly-visible streak of milk-white quartz, that extended, like a gigantic chalk-line, from the top to the bottom of a dark cliff on the opposite side of the river. "There's our sign-post, pard!" he cried. "Writing in big letters couldn't be no plainer; and now for the first creek beyond it, on this side."

Half a mile farther on they found it, a riotous little torrent of tumbling waters, madly dashing against the black boulders that contested its flow. Up this stream lay the road to the Val d'Oro, and that road they were to travel, but not just yet. Fording the creek, they took pains that their animals should leave distinct imprints of their feet in its farther bank. Then they hurried along the trail as before, until they discovered a place where they could get down to the river, that here looked as though it were fordable. Thurston crossed first, taking with him one end of two lariats that had been knotted together. His tough little mustang struggled bravely, but it was all he could do to maintain a footing in the rushing waters. Once across, the miner made his end of the rope fast to a tree; while, according to previous instructions, Hal-

stead attached the other end to one of the pack-mules. Then with Thurston pulling strongly on the rope, and with Halstead riding beside the mule and urging him along, the frightened animal was finally got safely across. Taking the end of the line with him, Halstead recrossed the river on his plucky mare, who only needed a hint of what was required of her to strain every nerve for its accomplishment, and in a few minutes the second mule was also safely landed. Then the little party, thoroughly drenched, and shivering from the chill of the icy waters, disappeared in the twilight shadows of the dark forest.

They stumbled along at the imminent risk of breaking their necks, as far as they dared, and until they reached a point that they felt certain must be well out of sight from the opposite bank of the river. There Thurston left his partner to light a small fire and make preparations for a camp, while he retraced their path, on foot, to see if he could discover any signs of those who had followed them.

It seemed a long time to Halstead, in the loneliness of that wild place, before his partner returned; and he was beginning to fear that some accident had befallen him in the darkness, when he was startled by the cheery exclamation of, "Well, pard, it's all right!" uttered almost beside him.

Thurston reported that, as near as he could make out, the pursuing party had camped for the night near the mouth of the very creek that flowed down from the Golden Valley. He also said that, as their own fire could not possibly be seen from the river, there was no

reason why they should not keep it up until they had cooked supper, and were thoroughly dry and warm. They dared not let their animals loose to hunt for grass, for fear lest they should stray beyond recovery. Moreover, they decided that the mules must be muzzled, so that it would be impossible for them to utter their discordant brayings, and thus betray their presence to their enemies.

Before daylight Thurston was off again on a reconnoitring trip, and the sun was an hour high before he returned. When he did so his first words were, "Who do you think Bowers has got with him, pard?"

"I haven't an idea," answered Halstead.

"Well, I couldn't hardly believe my own eyes when I first saw them. It ain't nobody else but them two sneaking galoots, Wake-up Tedder and Silas Bodfish."

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIRM OF CONSPIRATORS.

Tedder and Bodfish Take Counsel Together.—Birds of a Feather.—Old Names for the States, New Ones for the Diggings.—Mr. Bowers Exhibits the Map.—Mr. Bodfish Asks a Question.—The Conspirators are Euchred.—They Again Take Up the Trail.—The Partners Give them the Slip, and also Resume their Journey.

To explain the presence of that well-mated pair, Messrs. Tedder and Bodfish, in the mountains, and so far beyond even the most advanced mining camps as they were when seen by Thirsty Thurston, it is necessary to go back to San Francisco. Tedder had not only been amazed by what he saw and heard, while acting the part of a spy upon our friends in Merrill's hotel, but he had instantly decided upon a plan of operations for himself. Ever since hearing the first mention of the Golden Valley he had eagerly sought for more information concerning it, being convinced that it, and it alone, was the place for his gold-digging. Bodfish shared his feelings, and together they searched for some clue to the desired spot. They were almost in despair of learning anything more than the most indefinite rumors could tell them, when, by the merest chance, they stumbled across the very persons who, alone, of all in the city, seemed not only to know all about the valley, but to possess a map of it and its surroundings.

From the moment his eyes rested upon it, the obtaining of this map became Wake-up Tedder's all-absorbing desire. He doubted not that the person owning it could follow its leading directly to the valley of gold ; and, indeed, the possession of the map, and the discovery of the valley, seemed to him almost one and the same thing.

Tedder would gladly have reserved all the information gained by his eavesdropping for his own use ; but he realized that, for the carrying out of his design, the assistance of at least one companion would be necessary. So, as soon as he had got Bodfish safely away from the house at daybreak the next morning, he confided all that he had learned to him, and asked his advice. His sole idea had been to shadow the possessors of that map, without once losing sight of them until they should lead him to the Golden Valley.

Bodfish, however, counselled that, as Thurston and Halstead had said they were going to Sacramento City, the truth of which statement there was no reason to doubt, they should hasten to that same point, there make their preparations for a journey into the mountains, and be all ready for a start when the others arrived.

Reflecting that, so long as Thurston knew of his presence in San Francisco, he would undoubtedly attempt to find him, and call him to account for his rascality on the Isthmus, Tedder accepted this advice, and the worthy pair took their departure for Sacramento City that very day.

Having reached that point, purchased horses, and prepared for what, in their ignorance, they supposed would

be but a short trip into the mountains, they waited impatiently for the arrival of their guides. It was so long delayed that they began to fear lest the others had slipped by them unnoticed, and they visited Sutter's Fort to make cautious inquiries as to whether or not Thurston had been seen there.

From information concerning the country that they acquired during this period of waiting, they became aware that they had embarked upon a more serious piece of business than they had at first supposed. They also realized that the size of their party had better be increased, before they undertook to trail two such men as Thurston and Halstead, with the prospect of having to fight them if discovered. It was also suggested by Bodfish, that a couple of men, who were strangers to Thurston, but familiar with the country and its ways, would not only give their party its requisite strength and experience, but could present themselves boldly before the others, while he and Tedder must necessarily keep out of sight. What they had heard of the Golden Valley satisfied them that its supply of wealth was practically inexhaustible, and therefore it made little difference whether it should be divided among two men or four. "Besides," remarked Tedder, significantly, "in case there was any trouble about dividing, something might happen to the other fellows, you know. They say accidents is easy and frequent in the diggings."

Bodfish winked knowingly at this, and promised himself that no "accidents" should happen to him, if keeping his eyes wide open could prevent them.

The selection, from among the numerous acquaintances they were making, including gamblers, adventurers, and miners out of luck, of two men worthy to be intrusted with their secret, required such care, that they had not yet accomplished it when the *Rainbow*, with Thurston and Halstead on board, was made fast to the embarcadero of Sacramento City.

Being thus hurried in their decision, they hastily unfolded their plans to certain persons whom they were already considering, but whom they were inclined to fear rather than trust. These were two reckless characters, recently in from the diggings, who had squandered all their earthly possessions in the gambling-dens of Sacramento City, and, to use their own expression, "were teetotally bursted up."

One of these gentlemen afterward introduced himself to Halstead and Thurston as Royal Bowers, while the other, not to be outdone in significant nomenclature, was in the habit of signing his name "Asa Hart." They had, of course, borne other names before these; but, in those days, many an esteemed resident of the mining-camps of California would have turned pale beneath his disguise of dirt and sun-tan, had he been suddenly addressed by the name given him in baptism. This assuming of new names, especially adapted to the diggings, was so common a practice, that Messrs. Bowers and Hart ridiculed their new companions for not adopting it, and speedily took the liberty of addressing them as "Tedfish and Bodder."

The finances of these conspirators not being in a par-

ticularly flourishing condition, the new members of the party secured the services of a miserable Mexican, who, for a small consideration, engaged to steal a couple of horses for them. He succeeded in obtaining one, but failed in his second attempt, when he raided the corral of the Sutter's Fort horse-trader, as has been related. This deficiency was, however, soon afterward made good, through an appropriation by Mr. Hart from an incoming emigrant train, and by the time Halstead and Thurston left their camp at Blue Tent, their pursuers were riding hard and fast to overtake them.

It was easy enough to keep them in sight without arousing their suspicions, so long as there were other travellers on the road, but when most of these had branched off in the direction of the several mining-camps, it became difficult for the quartette to keep at such a distance that they could observe those in advance without being themselves noticed. Then it was that Mr. Bowers conceived the project of attaching himself to the partners, with the view of obtaining something in the way of information from them, and possibly of gaining possession of the precious map itself.

This scheme was thought favorably of by two of his companions; but Bodfish opposed it, on the ground that, if it should be discovered, Thurston and Halstead might either abandon their quest for the present, or else lead their followers on such a wild-goose chase over the mountains as would thoroughly exhaust them.

"I reckon we'd know how to stop any such caper as that," remarked Tedder, significantly.

"I don't care," replied Bodfish; "my plan would be to follow them quietly, until they led us just where we wanted to go. Then would be time enough to see about driving them off, or getting rid of them somehow."

His objections were, however, overruled, and Mr. Bowers, being empowered by his companions to do so, at once hurried ahead, and formed the acquaintance of Halstead and Thurston, with the results already narrated.

He had trembled when his fellow-conspirators were sighted by Linn, and hastened to interpose an objection when Thurston suggested a wait, to see if they were Indians. He had also been sharp enough to perceive that Thurston was suspicious of him, when he, adroitly, as he thought, directed the camp-fire conversation to the subject uppermost in his mind, and the other refused to admit any knowledge of it. Then he had determined to make a bold move and steal the big miner's coat, in the hope that it might contain the coveted map.

In this he had been so easily and completely successful, that he had returned full of exultation to his companions in evil, who were camped about three miles back on the trail. Mr. Bowers had, it is true, hesitated a moment before fully deciding to go back at all, and had rapidly summed up the advantages to be gained by deserting them and retaining the map for his own use. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him, as it had Tedder, that, in any case, he would need a companion upon an expedition to the Golden Valley, and that he might as well put up with those already embarked in the enterprise with him. "It'll be easy enough," he said, half

aloud, to himself, "for me and Asy to get rid of them chumps whenever we get through with 'em." He even speculated upon the possibility of an "accident" happening to his dear friend, Asa Hart, by which he would be left in sole and undisturbed possession of a wealth exceeding that of the "King of all the Injuns."

So Mr. Bowers rode happily back to his companions, and was received by them with great rejoicings, and a marked increase of respect for his genius. Even Bodfish, who was becoming snappish and testy under the unaccustomed hardships of this wild life, acknowledged that he had done a neat job, for which he was entitled to praise.

Leaving their camp, after removing all traces of it, so far as possible, they retired to a thicket on a little eminence overlooking the trail, but where they were completely hidden from it. There they awaited the appearance of Thurston and Halstead, who, they doubted not, would start in pursuit of Mr. Bowers as soon as they discovered their loss. They also fancied that, failing to catch him, and their further journeyings in the direction of the Golden Valley being rendered hopeless for want of their guiding map, they would quietly return to the diggings, or some other part of the country, and be heard of no more.

"In which case," remarked Mr. Bowers, with a smile of pleasant anticipation, "all other parties having abandoned the property, without leaving no tools to show ownership, we just steps in, stakes off our little old claims, and becomes millionairys."

As several hours passed and no signs of any disap-

pointed prospectors returning along the trail were to be seen, the quartette began to grow uneasy, and to speculate as to what might be "up" To help him pass the time of this impatient waiting, Bodfish asked for another look at the map. This Mr. Bowers kindly permitted, taking care, however, to retain his hold upon the parchment while the other examined it.

"It seems to be all right," finally remarked Bodfish, "but where does it start from?"

"From the river, of course," answered Mr. Bowers, promptly, with an expression of pity for the other's verdancy.

"But at what point on the river?" persisted Bodfish.

A cannon-ball fired into the party, or Thirsty Thurston suddenly appearing among them and demanding his stolen map, could not have caused greater consternation than this simple question.

Mr. Bowers snatched back the bit of parchment and looked at it, while Tedder and Asa Hart started to their feet and also peered anxiously at it, over his shoulders.

"We are euchred, by thunder!" said Mr. Bowers, slowly, but impressively; "we've got the map, and that's all we have got; for we ain't no nearer to finding the valley now than we was at this time a year ago. Men, we're up a stump, and no mistake!"

"What we've got to do is to find those fellers and *make* 'em tell us what they know," almost hissed Wake-up Tedder, savagely. "They've fooled with us long enough."

"Seems to me some folks ain't quite so smart as they

thought they were," remarked Bodfish, with a malicious grin.

"Those fellows have, like as not, studied this chart until they know all its bearings," suggested Asa Hart, who, beside being quite gentlemanly in his deportment and language, prided himself upon his knowledge of nautical matters. "Yes, gentlemen, they have doubtless noted the bearings; and also having the point of departure, they can keep their reckoning now as well as ever. My opinion is that they have slipped their cable long before this, and are heading a true course for the valley. This being the situation, I, for one, say, let us up sail and try to sight them again before they make port."

Perceiving the sound sense of this suggestion, the others accepted it; and with much growling and muttered profanity made their preparations for a hurried departure from the place in which they had wasted so much precious time.

Unencumbered by pack-animals, for they were travelling very light, and incurring much discomfort thereby, they gained rapidly upon our friends; and, had it not been for Kangaroot's leading of Halstead to the point from which he caught a momentary glimpse of them, would probably have overtaken them. In their savage mood such a meeting would undoubtedly have been followed by ugly consequences to both parties, and no good to either. The pursuers were less than half a mile behind the partners when the gathering gloom blotted out the trail and compelled them to make camp for the night.

They reached the creek that our friends had not

dared ascend, much as they desired to do so, while there was still a glimmer of light sufficient to show them the deep imprint of horses' hoofs on the farther bank. Having thus assured themselves that those whom they followed were still in advance of them, and had not left the trail, they prepared to pass the night and wait for daylight with what patience they could command. They were so poorly provided with provisions and a camping outfit, that their scant comfort bore a close resemblance to discomfort; and this was increased by a heavy thundershower, by which they were drenched, just before daybreak.

Wet and miserable, they were early in the saddle; and, crossing the creek, they pushed on with all possible speed along the trail, from which, however, all recent imprints had been completely washed away.

Thirsty Thurston chuckled as he watched them from a snug hiding-place on the opposite side of the river, and said to himself,

"Oh, yes. Travel on, folks. You'll know a heap more about these mountings afore you get out of 'em than you do now, and you're welcome to the experience. I shan't charge you a cent for it. I reckon, though, it'll be a long time before you strikes a spot so near to the Val d'Oro as the one you camped on last night."

The big miner's amazement knew no bounds when the party came opposite to him, and, though he could not distinguish their features at that distance, he recognized in two of them the well-remembered forms of Tedder and Bodfish.

"The blamed coyotes!" he inwardly exclaimed. "What infernal imp of darkness ever set them on our trail? Maybe they're only hunting us to pay back the money they owes us for that Isthmus racket," he added, with a grim smile, "but I reckon we'll rub out that account and start a new one; and, if they ever comes back to claim it, we'll give 'em a receipt in full. Yes, we will!"

Thurston watched his enemies until they disappeared over the crest of a ridge some miles distant, and then, satisfied that there was no danger of their return for some time at least, he hurried back to camp, eager to share with his partner the astonishing intelligence he had just gained.

After unmuzzling the mules and allowing them half an hour's feed in a patch of bunch grass that Halstead had discovered, they made their way back to the river and recrossed as they had crossed it the evening before. Instead, however, of climbing to the trail and following it back to the creek, they managed to lead the animals, two at a time, down the bed of the river in the water, close under the bank, to the mouth of the creek, and some distance up that angry torrent before again allowing them to tread dry land. It was an extremely difficult and dangerous undertaking, and the noonday sun shone straight down upon them before it was accomplished; but Thurston said it would pay them in the end, and his partner was well satisfied that he was right.

"There!" exclaimed the miner, with a great sigh of relief, when they were again mounted and making their

slow way up the rugged cañon of the creek. "I reckon Injuns, nor yet bloodhounds, couldn't smell out that trail. Now, perhaps, we'll be let do our own prospecting without any offers of help from Bowers, nor yet from Tedder, nor yet Bodfish, nor yet any other blamed ornery galoot, who thinks he's been from the mountains and can come it over Thirsty Thurston."

CHAPTER XIV.

A BEWILDERING TRAIL.

Up the Cañon.—A Lost Stream.—End of the Cañon and End of the Map.—A Grizzly in Camp.—Damage Done by "Old Eph."—Halstead has an Idea, and Thurston Sizes it Up.—A Landslip and a Buried Stream.—First Glimpse of the Golden Valley.

THE copy of their map, which the partners had studied until they were familiar with the appearance and relative position of every line on it, indicated a fork in the creek they were following, and showed its left-hand branch to flow directly from the valley they were seeking.

They hardly expected to reach this fork before nightfall, and, consequently, were not disappointed when they were obliged to make camp without having discovered it. They were, however, so confident of reaching it the next day, that they watched eagerly for it at each bend of the stream. The way had now become so rough that it was only with the greatest difficulty they could get their animals along. They might have found better travelling by climbing high up on the mountain side to the west of the cañon, but they dared not do this for fear of missing the branch that entered it from the east. So they toiled wearily and slowly up the bed of the stream, as often in the water as out of it, and dragged their tired animals slipping, stumbling, and floundering after them.

Several times they found it necessary to unload the

mules and carry the contents of their packs, one article at a time, over some particularly bad place. Then they would return for the animal, and while Halstead led him and encouraged him to move ahead, Thurston clung to his tail and eased his descent over precipitous places, where, without such assistance, he must have pitched headlong to the bottom. Before night they, as well as their horses and mules, were so bruised and lame from their numerous slips and falls, that they felt as though they had been beaten with clubs. They were also confronted by the very serious problem of how to obtain feed for their animals, for there was not a blade of grass to be found amid the boulders of this savage little cañon. Here and there a few rushes grew in clumps at the water's edge, and an armful of these, painfully gathered from nearly a mile of creek, afforded the hungry beasts a scanty and most unsatisfactory supper.

Still, after all this labor they had seen nothing of the branch they should have reached, and now, for the first time, they began to distrust their map, and to consider the possible unreliability of the source whence Don Almiro had obtained it.

During the day but one object had particularly attracted their attention from the difficulties of the way. It was a large spring that boiled up in the middle of the creek, and evidently furnished a full half of its supply of water, as the volume of the stream beyond it was reduced by at least that amount.

In discussing their map that evening, both the partners remarked that this spring was not shown on it, and it was

the omission of so important a landmark that first caused them to doubt its accuracy.

The next morning Thurston proposed that they should leave the animals at this camp and make an exploration of the cañon on foot, continuing it until they discovered the fork, or until they must necessarily turn back in order to regain camp before night. Halstead agreed to this, and, securing the animals so that there was no possible chance of their getting loose, the two men set out, Halstead carrying only a revolver with him, while Thurston had his rifle slung over his shoulders.

For several miles they scrambled along over a way so rough, that they doubted the possibility of bringing the animals over it, even should they find the Golden Valley at its farther end.

"It beats my time, pard!" exclaimed Thurston, from his seat in a shallow pool of cold water, into which he had at that moment involuntarily slid down a long, smooth incline of rock. "It's the worst I ever saw, and the hoss or mule that follers up this trail has got to have wings, which I haven't heard as they've begun to raise the breed yet in Californy."

The cañon grew narrower, blacker, and more chaotic, until at noon, when they decided they must turn back, it was a mere rent between two unscalable mountain sides that seemed to rise thousands of feet above them. As the explorers sat down for a short rest before beginning their toilsome retreat, they were awed, and almost terrified, by the savage grandeur of their surroundings. These drew from Thurston the remark, with which Linn agreed,

that for all the gold in the country he wouldn't spend a month in such a place, for it would certainly drive him crazy long before the time had expired.

Now that they sat still they could distinguish, above the noisy dashings of the torrent at their feet, a louder roar of waters, that seemed to come from behind a point a little farther up the cañon, and Halstead's curiosity prompted him to make the exertion necessary to discover its cause. Thurston watched him climb and spring from rock to rock until he saw him stop, look ahead for a moment, and then beckon for him to come on.

With some grumbling the miner complied with this request, and, in a few minutes, stood beside his partner, gazing in amazed silence at a sheet of water churned to the whiteness of driven snow, that fell in a superb cascade over a wall of black lava a short distance beyond them. The fall was a hundred feet or more in height, and the perpendicular wall behind it extended right across the cañon, completely filling it, and effectually barring any further progress in that direction.

"It's the head of the creek!" shouted Thurston.

"And the end of the map," answered Halstead.

So, indeed, it was the end of their map in that direction, for while this waterfall was marked on it there was nothing shown beyond it. And yet they had discovered no sign of the Golden Valley, nor even of the stream that was supposed to flow from it, and join its waters with those of the creek they had just followed from mouth to source. Most decidedly there was a mistake somewhere, and as our friends retraced their weary way to where

Golden Days.—Pages 150-151.

ZLY BEAR.

they had left the animals, they could not help thinking that it had been purposely made by the original designers of their map.

The sun had set for them behind the tall mountains that bounded the cañon on the west, though it was still an hour or more high for the outer world, before they reached a certain rocky point that they recognized as being in the immediate vicinity of their camp. They had hardly passed it when there came to their ears from down the cañon such a confusion of snorts, growls, squeals, and other sounds indicative of animal rage and terror, as warned them of some serious trouble in their camp.

Unslinging his rifle, Thurston held it ready for immediate use, and Linn drew his revolver as they hurried on. They came within view of the camp just in time to see a large grizzly bear strike down a mule with a single blow of one of his terrible forepaws, and stand over the prostrate body growling and snarling with rage. The victim uttered one wild cry as it fell, then it lay silent and motionless. The other animals, straining with all their strength to break the horse-hair ropes by which they were fastened to three separate trees, witnessed the tragedy with glaring eyes, distended nostrils, and loud snorts of terror.

Within ten yards of the monster Thurston raised his rifle and fired. The shot was apparently a deadly one, for the bear sank with a groan upon the body of the dead mule, and, like it, lay motionless. To make sure of it, however, the miner dropped his empty rifle, and with bowie-knife in hand ran in to complete his work. As the

keen blade was driven home, up to the haft, behind one of the bear's foreshoulders, the shock seemed to infuse new life into the animal. It sprang to its feet, and, in another instant, Thirsty Thurston lay at its mercy, while one of the huge paws was raised to give him a death-blow. It descended, but it was limp and lifeless. From the muzzle of Linn Halstead's heavy army revolver, held at the bear's ear, a bullet had entered its brain, and with a sobbing moan the great beast slowly sank upon the prostrate man, its earthly career closed forever.

To Halstead's relief the voice of his friend, raised in what would have been a loud "Hooray!" had it not been muffled by the mass of shaggy fur, assured him that Thurston was not only alive, but could not be seriously injured. It required the full strength of both men to move the body of the bear, so that the miner could crawl out from under it. When he finally did so, he was so covered with blood, and presented such a horrible appearance that, for a moment, all the young man's fears returned and he believed his partner to be severely wounded. Noting his alarmed expression, without quite understanding its cause, Thurston cried out:

"What's the matter, pard? There ain't nothing to be scared of now. Old Eph's dead enough. When the ball from that there pop of yourn knocked at the door of his living-room he had to weaken."

"It isn't the bear," interrupted Linn, "I know he is dead enough. I was afraid you were seriously hurt, and I'm not sure yet that you are not. Do you think you are?"

"Who? I? Hurt! Bless you, no, pard! I ain't hurt, except for a sort of feeling as if a pine-tree, or a church, or something solid had fell on me. I reckon I was a leetle mite too close for him to hurt me. He must have knocked me down with his forearm, for, as near as I can find out, his claws didn't touch me, and I don't believe 'twould take much hunting to find the marks if they had. But, pard, I'll allow 'twas a close call, and if you hadn't toed the mark, good and square, as you did, 'twould have been all day with me, for which I wish to express—"

"Oh, come now, Thirsty!" exclaimed Halstead, laughing, "you know you haven't any idea how to express it, and you'll only make a mess of it if you try. It's all right, and you can do as much for me some time."

"Correct you are," rejoined the miner, in a relieved tone, "and I'll live in hopes of the chance."

"Now," said Halstead, "let's take account of stock and see what damage 'old Eph,' as you call him, has done."

As they looked about them, they found that, besides killing the mule, the bear had knocked down their tent and made sad havoc with their provisions. He had eaten up the sugar, dipped into the flour, sampled the hard bread, and sniffed at the bacon. He was probably engaged in making the most of his opportunity with these dainties, when he incautiously strayed within reach of the mule, who had let fly at him with both heels. They judged this to have been the case when, upon examination of the bear's body, they found two of his ribs to be broken. The ball from Thurston's rifle had grazed the

animal's heart, and the point of the bowie-knife had been driven well into it, so that he was mortally wounded before the second bullet penetrated his brain.

The bear had, however, taken his revenge upon the mule for kicking him, and he would certainly have settled with Thurston for shooting him, and probably with Linn Halstead also, had not the young man acted with the prompt coolness that he had displayed.

The magnitude of the danger just passed seemed to lessen their other troubles, and though they had just lost a mule and a quantity of provisions, both of inestimable value in that place, besides being utterly at fault concerning the road to the Val d'Oro, a reaction of feeling set in, and they faced a cheerful fire in remarkably good spirits that evening. They scraped up about three quarts of the broken fragments of hard bread scattered about by the bear, and gave them to the hungry horses and mule. They also built several large fires of pine-logs about the camp to keep off the wolves that, attracted by the scent of blood, had already begun to gather and threatened to stampede the animals.

Early in the morning, leaving his partner to skin the grizzly and restore order so far as possible among their effects, Halstead started off down the creek, nominally to gather an armful of rushes. He had also another purpose in making this trip, which he did not care to mention to Thurston just then, and it carried him as far down the cañon as the point where the great spring boiled up in the middle of the creek.

Here he closely scrutinized the opposite bank of the

stream and even waded across, to climb, for a short distance, up among the young pines that covered it. He was evidently satisfied with what he saw, for, as he hurried back toward camp, gathering rushes as he went, his face wore a pleased expression, and he smiled at his own thoughts.

Thurston was relieved to see the young man coming, for he had begun to wonder at his long absence. "Is that all you could find, pard?" he asked, in a disappointed tone, as Halstead threw down his small bundle of rushes. "That won't be enough for 'em to smell of, let alone eat."

"No," replied Halstead, as he impartially divided this meagre breakfast among the three animals. "I found an idea down there besides, and perhaps it may put us on the right trail."

"Good enough; spit her out and let's size her up!" exclaimed the other, greatly interested.

Linn's idea, as briefly explained to his partner, was, that the map might be right after all, and that the stream, for which they had searched in vain, might have been buried beneath a great landslide, through and under which it had forced its way until it finally rejoined the creek in the form of a spring. "In fact, Thirsty," he said, in conclusion, "I believe the boiling spring in the middle of the creek back there is the mouth of our stream, and that somewhere beyond the eastern wall of the cañon we'll find it."

With a resounding slap of his great hand against his thigh the miner exclaimed, in a tone of intense admira-

tion, "Pard, you've got the levellest head of any man that ever lit into the diggings. The next time any one asks if you've been from the mountains, you just tell him you was born and brung up in 'em, and I'll swear it's so. Why, if I'd a figgered out that idea of yours I'd a been prouder'n a turkey gobbler the day after Thanksgiving. Of course that's the trail to the valley, and any blamed fool could follow it now that you've pointed out the blaze. Let's go, pard, and not keep the nuggets waiting."

Thurston had succeeded in skinning the great bear, and also in extracting its terrible claws, from which he declared he would have a necklace made when they returned to San Francisco, and that Halstead would have to wear it, Indian fashion, in token of his prowess. He had gathered together their scattered belongings, and so repaired whatever was broken or torn, that their outfit again looked quite respectable. As they would be obliged to walk and lead their animals, so long as they remained in that rough country, the loss of the mule was not so serious as it might have been. When its pack had been placed upon Fanita's back, they again started in search of the Golden Valley with renewed hopes of success in finding it.

Although that part of the eastern wall of the cañon opposite the boiling spring was considerably lower than the mountains on either side, it was still several hundred feet high, and only after hours of toil did the prospectors manage to get their weakened animals up its steep side to the top.

The almost level, heavily-wooded plateau across which they now travelled only extended about a quarter of a

mile, when it suddenly dropped off into another deep, narrow cañon. They could not see its bottom on account of the dense growth of forest-trees filling it, but up from its depths, mingled with the sighing of the pines, came clearly the sound of falling waters.

"It's there, pard! It's there!" cried Thurston, excitedly, "and all we've got to do now is to follow it up."

They did follow it up, skirting the edge of the cañon. Three hours after they first heard the music of its waters they stood on the verge of a sheer, rocky precipice and saw its source sparkling like a gem in the last rays of the evening sun. It was a tiny blue lake centred in the perfect oval of the Golden Valley.

CHAPTER XV.

BARRED OUT.

Thurston Begins to Dispose of his Wealth.—"But Where is the Entrance?"—An Unsuccessful Search.—Linn Becomes Discouraged, and his Partner Relates an Anecdote.—Only One Idea at a Time.—"Let's go Back."—Kangaroot is Seen in the Valley.—His Trail Discloses the Entrance.—A Wonderful Portal.

THERE was no possible doubt that the smiling valley, nestled so cozily among the grim mountain peaks, was the very one for which the partners had searched so anxiously, and of which half the miners in the California gold region were talking or thinking about at that time. It was about three miles in length by one in breadth at its widest part, and its shape was the perfect oval shown on their little map. Moreover, there was the lake in its exact centre, that had been described as the principal feature by which they would recognize it.

For some minutes the two prospectors gazed down into it in silence. Then Thurston turned to his companion, and asked, seriously, as though following up a chain of thought:

"Pard, do you reckon we'd better buy out Mrs. Victoria and live in the Tower of London? Or shall we start a ranch of our own, in the little old town back here on the bay, that'll knock the everlasting spots out of all them foreign towers, and call it the 'Tower of 'Frisco'?"

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Halstead, staring at his partner in surprise. "Is it a joke?"

"No, it ain't nary joke," replied the other, soberly. "But they say it's a blamed sight harder to play a hand that's all face cards and trumps, like ours is, according to Hoyle, than one that don't show a color in the pan. I was only wanting to fix the proper lay-out for our pile, before we showed it up. Then, when the monte sharps jumped onto me for a dusty galoot, I could say, 'No you don't, gents. The nuggets is already pre-empted and no sharps need apply!' Sabe?"

The simple-hearted miner was somewhat disconcerted by the roar of laughter with which his partner greeted this serious counting of unhatched chickens, and looked anxiously at him as though to discover the source of his merriment.

"Why, Thirsty, old man," gasped Linn, as soon as he had recovered his breath, "I do believe you are considering how you shall spend millions of money before you've dug a single ounce of gold."

"But we've got it right there," urged Thurston, pointing down into the valley. "This, here, is the Val d'Oro, ain't it, pard?"

"I hope it is, and I think it is," replied Linn. "But as for the gold we are going to get out of it, why we haven't got into it yet; and, for my part, I don't see how we are going to, either."

The young man might well be puzzled as to the location of an entrance to this desirable valley, for it was completely surrounded by a smooth, unbroken wall of

sheer rock, nowhere less than two hundred feet in height, and in most places much more than that. The only apparent break in the wall was at the lower end of the valley, where the stream they had followed left it through a narrow rent in the mountain side, that was evidently the most impossible place of all for them to descend.

As it was growing late, and they were evidently not to sleep in the Golden Valley that night, they hunted up a place in which grass, wood, and water were abundant, and made camp in a grove of sweet-scented cedars close beside it.

Taking a last look at the valley before it was completely shrouded in the evening shadows, they distinguished a group of moving forms on the farther side of the little lake, that they fancied were elk. This was most reassuring, for if elk could get into the valley they could, though Thurston did suggest that perhaps they had just naturally tumbled in and couldn't get out.

By sunrise of the following morning they had prepared and eaten breakfast, packed their camp outfit, and were ready to start on their impatient search for a gateway through which they might enter the Val d'Oro.

The sight of the elk noticed the previous evening, and also of another band near the head of the valley, made them feel confident that it had such an entrance, and they set out full of hope that they should speedily discover it. The character of the country surrounding the valley was such that they had no difficulty in following the rim of the depression, and making a careful examination of its walls.

They travelled slowly and scanned closely every point that offered the slightest indication of an opening, only to meet with one disappointment after another. They envied the great eagles, hawks, and other soaring birds that circled over their heads, and then, satisfied with their observations, dropped lightly down into the tempting valley as though to show how easily it could be entered by those who knew the way.

After rounding the upper end, they could scan the bare face of the cliffs above which they had camped. In that pure atmosphere they could discover its every crevice and line, as though it were but a few rods from them, but it was sternly forbidding and promised them nothing.

By the time the sun had reached his meridian height, and was reflected with a dazzling radiance from the waters of the golden lake, they had completed their circuit of the imprisoned valley. They reached the edge of the narrow cañon along the opposite side of which they had travelled the day before, without having discovered a path by which a mountain sheep, much less a human being, could have gained the level they so ardently desired to reach. It seemed to them an enchanted valley, and they doubted if human foot had ever trodden the shores of its lake.

"I believe the stories of its treasures are only yarns, told because nobody can ever find out whether they are true or not," said Halstead, crossly; as, hot, tired, and disappointed, he flung himself down in the shade of a solitary cedar, that marked the limit of their progress in that direction.

"Maybe so, pard! maybe so," assented Thurston. "All the same, Don Almiro said the nuggets was there, and I ain't hardly prepared to weaken just yet. You see I've figgered on that there 'Tower of 'Frisco,' till it's got a powerful hold on my mind, and I can't clearly see how I'm to get shet of it all of a sudden."

"All right," said Halstead, "go ahead. I'll stick to it as long as you will; but what do you propose to do now?"

"Well," replied Thurston, "I was wondering if the lariats, all spliced together, would be long enough to let us slide down over these rocks to the bottom."

"Oh, yes! They are each forty feet long, and we have got four of them. That makes a hundred and sixty feet of rope, which is plenty long enough to slide down, and have a drop of fifty or sixty feet more when you get to the end of it. Then, if you survive the fall, perhaps you can get up again, but I'd like to know how," answered Halstead, sarcastically.

"That's just what I was a-figgering," rejoined the good-natured miner, without taking the slightest offence at the other's tone. "I knowed the ropes wouldn't answer, but I thought it was just as well to count all the chances of the game. Getting rid of a scheme that won't work is next best thing to getting hold of one that will.

"I'll never forget a feller that used to ranch it on the lower Mokosumne. He was mighty close-fisted and only kept up one hoss, which was the all-firedest, meanest, most contrary, old wall-eye that ever was sinched. One day the plug got to cavortin' round, and bimeby he riz

up so straight on his hind-legs that he tripped on his own tail, fell over backward and broke his neck. Then the feller that owned him said it was about the luckiest thing that could have happened, for he'd always considered his own life was in danger long's that hoss was alive, and now he could get one that was more peaceful. You see he couldn't sell the plug 'cause everybody knowed him, and it went agin the grain to give him away or turn him loose. Likewise, he warn't willing to buy another hoss long's he had one.

"That was the way with my idea of the ropes. I knowed it warn't a go, but I never could afford to own two ideas at one time, so I naturally felt obliged to hang onto the one I had till you jumped on it and broke its neck. Now I'm free to corral another, and if you've got any to spare trot 'em out and let's sample 'em."

This story of Thurston's put his partner into a good humor again, and, though he was obliged to confess that he had no ideas, he sprang to his feet with renewed energy, and they began to retrace their steps around the rim of the valley, determined to search more carefully than ever for an entrance to it.

Foot by foot, almost inch by inch, they examined the ground, but with no better success than before, and at nightfall they reached the camping-ground they had left in the morning, completely discouraged and disgusted.

"It's no use!" cried Halstead, gloomily, as they wearily unpacked their animals and prepared to make camp. "We've only been wasting our time, and we might as well go back to the diggings that can be got at

as fast as we know how. If this valley was paved with gold, as Bowers said, it wouldn't do us any good. I only wish those fellows were here and in our fix. I never want to see the place again anyhow, and I move that we leave it at daylight to-morrow morning. It's a fraud! that's what the Golden Valley is."

"All right, pard," answered Thurston. "I won't say as I'm wholly prepared to back your opinion quite yet, but we'll take a sleep on it, and if you feel in the morning same as you do now, why we'll just pack up and mosey along back."

Linn Halstead awoke the next morning as fully convinced as he had been the night before that they had been on a wild-goose chase, and the sooner they retraced their steps to some more promising locality the better it would be for them.

Thurston was sorry that the young man felt as he did, for he would have liked to linger a few days longer in the vicinity of the Golden Valley. He had, however, given his word to go back if his partner so desired, and he was too honest a fellow to think for an instant of retracting it. So they packed their camp outfit and made ready for a start.

Halstead was so impatient to be off that he was greatly put out when Thurston, who had gone to bring in the animals, came back and reported that his mustang, Kangaroot, had succeeded in drawing his picket-pin and was nowhere to be seen.

As it was still too dark to follow his trail, they ate breakfast while waiting for the sun to rise. At last it ap-

peared, first tinging the white-robed peaks about them with a rosy light, that changed to the deeper red of Arctic snows, and then to yellow gold. The luminous flood rolled rapidly down the mountain sides, until, at last, it leaped to the very bottom of the Golden Valley. The two men watched its wonderful progress in silence, until suddenly Thurston, who was gazing longingly down at the place of so many fond dreams, uttered a great exclamation of mingled surprise and delight.

"Snakes and grizzlies, pard!" he cried. "If there ain't that hoss, that ar blamed little Kangaroot and another hoss with him, cavortin' round as big as life and twice as natural, down in the bottom of the valley. Hooray for him! They say there ain't no sense worth having 'longside of hoss sense, and now I believe it. Bully for Kangaroot! He shall have gold oats to eat for the rest of his natural days if he wants 'em."

Linn Halstead was almost as much excited over this discovery as his partner, though not quite, for, as he had never tasted the joys of actual gold-digging, he could not realize the intense fascination of the pursuit to one who had. He, however, at once forgot that they had even talked of going back, and was quite as eager as Thurston to renew their search for the entrance to the valley that they had so signally failed in finding the day before.

In order to discover the trail taken by the runaway mustang, Thurston started from the edge of the cliff on a long semicircle around their camping-place, while Halstead held Fanita and the mule, ready to lead them on whenever the trail should be struck.

At length Thurston shouted that he had it, and, as he carefully followed it up, his companion kept close behind him with the animals. The iron picket-pin that dragged behind the runaway had made a plain trail by breaking a twig here and tearing up a bunch of grass there. Besides this, the animal had frequently stopped to feed, as was shown by the cropped herbage. For this reason their path was erratic, and turned in every direction, even crossing itself several times. Following it was like unwinding a tangled skein, but they traced it with infinite patience, realizing that in it lay their surest, if not their only hope of discovering the entrance.

Finally it took a straight course, directly away from the valley and toward the slope of a mountain that bounded the plateau on the east. Thurston said that at this point the mustang had probably seen or scented the other horse now with him in the valley, and whose presence had afforded them subject for much speculation. They had been able to discover that the strange animal was neither saddled nor dragged a picket rope behind him, but was apparently wild.

The new turn of the trail took them toward a thick grove of cedars, that stood about half a mile from the edge of the valley, and though they disliked to be thus, as they thought, taken in exactly the wrong direction, there was nothing for them to do but follow wherever it led. At the edge of the cedars they came upon two sets of tracks, and knew that here the mustang had joined the other horse. For a little space there was a confusion of hoof-prints, as though the two animals had stood for

a while exchanging greetings and the news. Then the double trail proceeded directly toward a trough-like depression, in the bottom of which flowed a small stream, that seemed, as far as they could trace it through the forest, to extend some distance up the mountain side.

Entering this, their guiding signs led them to the right, or again toward the valley along a narrow ledge that bordered the rivulet. As they advanced, the depression grew deeper and more trough-like, cutting a narrow fissure through the forest-clad plateau, with its bottom inclined sharply downward, at the same angle as the mountain side from which it had come. All at once it entered a high, but very narrow, rocky archway, like a gigantic Gothic window, through which the explorers could see a distant glimmer of light.

Once inside of it they could not distinguish the roof of this wonderful natural tunnel, so far was it above them, but the sound of their footsteps, and the plashing of waters on its granite floor, were echoed sharply high over their heads. The light in front of them rapidly increased in brightness, as they advanced full of amazement at the extraordinary place, but it seemed to come from low down, as though under a curtain.

So, indeed, it did, as they quickly discovered, but the curtain was of rock many feet in thickness, and it hung to within a few yards of the wet pathway they were treading. With feelings of mingled wonder, awe, and curiosity, they passed beneath it, and found themselves in a thicket of bushes bathed in the full glare of sunlight. The little brook flowed through these, and following it a

few paces farther, they stepped from the thicket, and stood in the glorious, rock-walled amphitheatre of the Golden Valley.

Its secret entrance was no longer a secret to them; its mystery was solved, and the Val d'Oro was no more a myth, but a tangible fact, and they were actually treading its golden soil.

Their first impulse was to grasp each other's hand. Then Thurston said:

"Pard, will you kindly hit me, or kick me, or do something to wake me up out of this here dream?"

But in the fulness of his joy Linn Halstead only laughed aloud.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE GOLDEN VALLEY.

Unsuspected Beauties.—Closing the Entrance.—Establishing a Camp.—Elk that had never been Hunted.—Now for the Gold!—Bitter Disappointments.—The Dry Diggings no Better than the Wet.—Running in Stock.—Kangaroot Buys his Liberty.

Now that they were really in the valley, the partners saw that it was beautiful beyond any idea they had gained of it from the top of the cliffs. It was carpeted with a thick sward of rich grass, upon which Fanita and the mule began to graze eagerly the moment they discovered it. They no longer wondered that elk, deer, and other grass-feeding animals were attracted to the place, or that Kangaroot had readily followed the lead of the strange horse, who had doubtless communicated to him the delights of this pleasant pasturage. The all-pervading green of the grass was enlivened by a rare profusion of most exquisite wild-flowers, about which fluttered innumerable brilliant butterflies. Groves of low-spreading live-oaks filled with song-birds dotted the valley in every direction, and gave it the appearance of a beautiful, carefully-tended pleasure-ground.

The little stream they had followed in entering was completely hidden by tall rushes and other water-loving plants, which explained why they had not noticed it in looking down from above. They stood on the highest

point of a sort of a mound that, spreading out fan-like, sloped gently and evenly away on all sides from the mouth of the tunnel. After gazing for a few minutes at the beautiful landscape outspread before them, they began to descend this with the view of reaching the lake in the centre of the valley.

They had gone but a short distance, when Thurston suddenly stopped, and, interrupting Halstead's exclamations of delight and wonder, said,

"There's one thing we've got to do right away, pard, before we go a step farther, and that is to put up the bars of this here corral. We want meat mighty bad, and there's plenty of it running round loose down here. Likewise, we want that mustang, and the hoss he's mated with, and we know we've got 'em corralled now; but how long do you reckon they'll stay so when once we begins to hunt 'em, if we leaves the bars down? They'll just light out the way they came in, and so'll our meat, and we won't have nothing left to live on but thin air and scenery."

Linn understood that his partner's remarks referred to the closing of the entrance of the valley, so that its present occupants might be kept within its limits, and he at once appreciated the wisdom of the suggestion. So they returned to the mouth of the tunnel, and, with an hour's hard work, succeeded in erecting before it a barrier of stakes, poles, and branches that would effectually prevent the egress of anything larger than a rabbit.

When this had been satisfactorily accomplished, they again started in the direction of the lake, which they soon

discovered, and on the shore of which they decided to make their camp. They had caught a momentary glimpse of Kangaroot and his companion, but he had also seen them, and was off like the wind at the sight, kicking up his heels, and snorting, in token of his full appreciation of the liberty he had no intention of forfeiting, so long as he could retain it. The two men only laughed as they watched him disappear in one of the oak groves, well satisfied that the precautions they had taken would insure his easy capture when they wanted him.

The site they finally selected for a camping-place was a slight eminence, shaded by fine trees, on the northern shore of the lake, that commanded a full sweep of its waters. Here they discovered a rude semi-circle of boulders, that almost seemed as though arranged to form a barrier against attack. Nothing could have suited their purpose better; and here they pitched their tent, after unloading their animals, turning the mule loose with a trailing lariat attached to his neck, and picketing Fanita in a patch of such luscious grass as she had not seen for many a day.

After a hasty lunch of hard bread and unsweetened coffee, they resumed work upon their camp; for, as Thurston said, the Indians knew of this valley, if no one else did, and there was no telling when they might take it into their heads to visit it, or what humor they might be in upon discovering white men within its limits. "Besides," he added, "when we begin to gather in the nuggets, we want some place of safe keeping for 'em. Gold's gold the world over, and there never was a pile dug yet

but what some galoot stood ready to figger out how he could come it over the owner and snab onto it."

As the tent was no longer water-tight, owing to its recent rough handling by the grizzly, they erected above it a steep framework of poles, heavily thatched with branches and rushes. They rearranged some of the boulders in front, so as to leave but a single narrow entrance, one side of which lapped over the other and formed what military men would call a curtain.

Although they worked hard and diligently, this was all they had time to do that afternoon. Toward sunset, which came very early in that low-lying valley, Thurston started off on foot to try and secure some fresh meat for supper, while Halstead remained in camp to get things comfortably arranged for the night and to collect a supply of fire-wood.

In a few minutes he heard the report of his partner's rifle, and, according to previous arrangement, he mounted Fanita and went out to bring in the game. He found the hunter, less than a quarter of a mile from camp, engaged in dressing a fine buck elk. According to his account, it had just stood and looked at him until he was well within rifle range, apparently filled with curiosity to learn what kind of strange creature he was. The elk had evidently never been hunted nor made the acquaintance of human beings armed with guns.

"It went again the grain to shoot him," said Thurston, "he looked so handsome standing there, with his head lifted up and sniffin'. I had a mighty hankerin' after his meat, but I felt that ornery over the mean advantage I

was taking of him, that I couldn't no more pull the trigger till he jumped, and I see he was going to vamose the ranch, than I could have beat him in a foot race."

Linn's generous nature fully sympathized with his partner's feelings, but hunger can overcome the tenderest pity, and it was with an intense satisfaction that they sat down, an hour later, to a supper of smoking steaks, cut from a haunch of the noble fellow whose death they had mourned.

The next day they completed their camp, by erecting a barrier of heavy logs, breast high, behind it. They took all these precautions for defence against possible enemies, because they were only two men in the heart of a wild country, far removed from any chance of assistance in case of trouble. They had no enemies whom they knew of, unless the four men who had followed them and attempted to steal their secret could be called such. If they succeeded in collecting any quantity of gold, however, the mere fact of its being in their possession, should it by any means become known, would be sufficient to bring down upon them any number of the desperate characters who infested the country at that time, and who would not only prove enemies, but formidable ones. Then, they must always be prepared to defend themselves against Indians; though, at that distance from the settlements, Thurston did not think these would prove hostile to white men. So they made of their little camp as strong a fortification as possible, thus acting upon the principle that the time of peace is the time to prepare for war.

Although they talked constantly of the gold they ex-

pected to find, and indulged in all manner of speculations concerning the places most likely to contain it, as well as the form and quantity in which it would be discovered, they wisely refrained from searching for the precious metal until their camp should be secured and provisioned. Thurston knew that when such a search was once begun, its every success increased the difficulty of interrupting it, even to attend to important duties. They did not for a moment doubt that gold was plentiful somewhere in the valley, though they had yet to discover the first indication of its presence. They, however, agreed that neither one should begin the search for it until both were ready to do so, without neglecting any duty or precaution. They therefore spent three days in hunting elk and deer, and in jerking, or drying after it was cut into thin strips, the meat thus obtained. In this way they laid in a two-months' supply of food, which, while it would certainly prove a monotonous diet, unless they discovered some means of varying it, would secure them against hunger, and at the same time enable them to prosecute their gold digging without interruption.

At last the day dawned when, everything having been done to secure their safety and comfort that could be thought of, they were at liberty to begin the search they so longed to make. Linn Halstead had become so eager to enter upon it, during the short time they had spent in the valley, that he hardly slept the night before; and, when he did, his dreams were of mountains, lakes, and streams of gold.

They decided to try the shores of the lake first, and so,

carrying the washing-pan, pick, shovel, and their rifles, they went down to the water's edge. Here Halstead received his first practical lesson in gold-washing, and was delighted when, mixed with the black sand to which he finally reduced the mass of earth he had scooped up in his pan, he saw several glittering particles, and realized that they were gold.

Thurston, however, was greatly disappointed ; for he saw that, altogether, these shining bits did not amount to more than ten cents' worth of gold, and he had confidently expected the pan to yield at least an ounce. Then he tried a panful of earth in another place, with no better results, and they gradually moved along the shore, washing a little earth here and there, sometimes finding the "color" a little more plentiful than at others, but never meeting with the encouraging results they had anticipated. Finally, they had gone entirely around the lake, and reached again their point of starting.

They had thus occupied several hours, and the combined results of their labor did not amount to more than three dollars. They had even prospected for a short distance on both the outlet and inlet of the lake, but with such meagre results that they were not tempted to go far from it in either direction.

As they sat down to eat lunch, for they had fallen into the habit of reserving their principal meal for the close of the day, Halstead remarked, gloomily :

"It seems to me that washing for gold is about as hard work as I ever tackled, and that the pay is mighty poor. Selling papers in San Francisco is a better trade, so is

carpentering ; and I believe if we'd stayed there till now, and stuck to either one of them, we would have been worth more than all the gold there is in this confounded Golden Valley."

"Well, the wet diggings about here don't seem to amount to much so far, that's a fact," reflected Thurston. "But, pard, you can't never tell when a streak of luck is going to strike you in this business ; and when it does come, it's mighty oncertain about hanging on. Why, if we'd struck it rich this morning, I should expect that, like as not, the lead would peter out to-morrow. Being as we ain't more'n made our board to-day, I shouldn't be one mite surprised if we scooped in a pile to-morrow."

"I should," responded Linn, "unless you mean a pile of worthless dirt, such as we have been scooping in for the last few hours."

The afternoon was devoted to what Thurston called their dry diggings. They visited a number of different points along the sides of the valley, dug a panful of earth at each place, and, carrying it to the lake, there washed it. In this way they had even less success than with their experiments of the morning, and, finally throwing down his pan, Halstead exclaimed :

"Thirsty, old man, I've had enough of this business, and you are welcome to my share of all the gold there is in this Golden Valley. I don't believe there's anything golden about it, outside of its name, more than there is in any other part of California, nor as much as we'd find most anywhere else. So I guess I'll go back to camp and get supper ready."

The young man would not have made this speech, had he not been bitterly disappointed at having his high hopes and eager anticipations of the morning so thoroughly dashed as they were by the insignificant results of their day's hard work. He had fully expected to make $100 at the very least by this time, and had made barely two. He had had none of the experience of the prospector who, for days, weeks, and sometimes months, patiently examines the dirt of one likely place after another, only to meet with successive disappointments, but finally to reap the rich reward of a single well-earned success. His feelings and words were perfectly natural under the circumstances, and the old miner understood this when he answered pleasantly :

" All right, son, run along and don't bother with the stuff any more. I'll stick to it awhile longer, and when I strike pay dirt I'll let you know. We're pardners in everything, you remember, and since you've stood your share of the hard luck so far, we'll divvy in the winnings just the same when the cards takes a turn. By the way, don't you think you'd better take the mare and make a try to round in the stock before dark? I saw some bear-tracks back here a piece."

Saying that he would do this, Halstead went back to the camp for Fanita, leaving Thurston to continue the prospecting ; for, as he said, there were " dead loads of likely places they hadn't seen the color of yet."

Halstead had little trouble in catching and securing the mule, but when, after a long search, he discovered the mustang and its inseparable friend the wild horse, which

they decided must have escaped months before from some emigrant train, the animals started off on a run toward the head of the valley.

They made directly for the entrance to the tunnel by which they had reached this pleasant feeding-ground, and the wild horse, who was well in advance of his companion, was much surprised to find the accustomed place of egress closed against him. He did not stop to consider the cause of this state of affairs, but, wheeling, he dashed back through the shrubbery and galloped off at full speed, down the opposite side of the slope from the one that the mustang, with Fanita close at his heels, was ascending. Kangaroot attempted to follow his friend, when suddenly his career was checked by the catching of the iron picket-pin, that he still dragged after him, in a small bush.

As Linn sprang from his mare and stooped to seize the lariat, the mustang gave a desperate tug, the bush was torn up by the roots, and away he went, kicking up his heels and snorting with triumph.

He was allowed to go unmolested and unnoticed, for the last rays of the setting sun, streaming red and warm over the rocky rim of the Golden Valley, struck a dull gleam from the spot where an instant before the little bush had stood. It caught Halstead's eye, and he fell on his knees beside the slight excavation. In another moment he held in his hands, and was eagerly brushing the dirt from, a lump of something that thrilled him through and through as he touched it, that caused all the blood to leave his sun-tanned face, and then to rush back again with a great throbbing glow.

Golden Days.—Pages 178–179.


W. G. Jackson

The treasure-vaults of the Golden Valley lay at its gateway, and their key had just been handed to this sceptical young adventurer, who but a few minutes before had declared it as his belief that they had no existence.

As Fanita galloped madly back to camp, Thirsty Thurston, who was approaching it from the opposite direction, weary, but in nowise disheartened with his unsuccessful day's toil, was startled by the wild shouts of her rider.

"Where's the bear?" he cried, unslinging his rifle and cocking it.

"Here's the bear!" shouted Halstead, joyously, springing from his panting horse, and thrusting the lump of metal into the hands of the astonished miner. "And it's a golden bear! And I'm ashamed of myself! And I never was so happy in my life! And the Golden Valley is golden! And this first nugget that I ever found is yours, and you've got to take it, because it's mine, and we are partners in everything!"

Here the young man paused in his incoherent speech, breathless with joyful emotions, and Thurston, rubbing the lump of gold with his shirt-sleeve, said soberly:

"Pard, for a steady, week-in-and-week-out, never-run-dry-in-the-summer-time, warranted to wash and not fade, all wool or money returned, run of luck, yours beats the deck; and this here Thirsty by name and thirsty by nature don't want no better lay in this little old world than to be your pardner."

CHAPTER XVII.

DIGGING A FORTUNE.

The "Tower of 'Frisco."—Thirsty's Dreams and Linn's Hopes.—A Rich Diggings.—Making a Cradle, and Rocking it.—The Cradle is Valued at $10,000.—Weighing Gold without Scales.—The "Bank."—A Stranger on Top of the Cliffs.

THE lump of gold with which the mustang Kangaroot presented Linn Halstead in exchange for his liberty, was estimated by Thurston to weigh about five pounds, and, consequently, to be worth in the neighborhood of a thousand dollars. As the partners sat up until a late hour that night, unconscious of fatigue or drowsiness in their excitement over the wonderful find, it was handed back and forth between them, examined, cleaned of every speck of dirt, and rubbed until its whole mass glowed in the firelight. Its yellow gleam inflamed their imaginations, until they ran riot with all manner of extravagant fancies. Under its influence Thirsty Thurston's "Tower of 'Frisco" grew and expanded, until it assumed the proportions, and was endowed with the luxurious appointments, of a regal palace, rivalling in magnificence the wildest creations of Oriental story-tellers.

"It's going to be marble, pard, white marble, with gold trimmings picked out with diamonds and all them shining stones my old mother used to read about in the back part of the Bible," cried Thurston. "And, pard,

it'll have pictures—acres of 'em. And mirrors! There won't be no bar-room in 'Frisco that'll hold a candle to the Tower in the mirror line. Furniture! Well, now, when you see that furniture, all made of ivory, cut out by Chinamen, and mounted in yaller silk, you can just bet your sweet life it'll make you get up and howl.

"Carpets! You'll think they're flower-beds, and get right down to smell 'em.

"It'll have a gold dome, with the little old Stars and Stripes just a-flapping on top, and a brass band playing 'Hail Columbia' in every room.

"Nifty! Pard, just chalk it on your slate that it's going to be nifty, and high-toned, and run in a bang-up hotel style. Why, there'll be a gold-mounted nigger at the front door, bowing and smiling, and saying, 'Walk right in, gents. This is Jedge Thurston's ranch, with grub and liquor free to all his friends.'

"And the bar-keeps'll loaf round in their big diamond pins, asking, 'Will you take 'em straight or mixed, gentlemen? One don't cost no more'n the other; for it's a free blow-out, and Colonel Thurston stands the damage.'

"And, pard, there'll be monte lay-outs where every body'll burst the bank, and nobody'll lose a shekel. The dealers, all dressed in white neckties, will say, 'Name your cards, gentlemen, and don't be in no ways bashful or oneasy. They's all backed to win by the sharp that runs the ranch.'"

"And where will you be all this time?" asked Halstead, greatly amused at this picture of his partner's future magnificence.

"Who? Me? Why, I'll be setting in the band-wagon on the other side of the street, with a bull pup, and a cigar in my teeth! I'll have my pants tucked into bootlegs, and a slouch hat pulled down kinder reckless, so as the boys can't say I'm feeling too big for my clothes. Then every galoot that comes along'll say, 'Ah, general! How goes it?' or, 'You're looking hearty, senator! No use offering you any cemetery lots to-day!' Oh, yes! Thirsty'll be there! He'll be scooping it all in! You can bet your pile again a Chinee wash-ticket he will.

"And, pard, half the shop is yours from now till no time, to make a Joss house of, or a keno-ranch, or anything else that strikes your happy fancy. Oh, ain't we just little old dukes, though!"

Linn Halstead's aspirations did not soar to quite the lofty height attained by his partner, but he nevertheless indulged in many pleasing fancies as he fondly handled his first lump of gold. In imagination he saw himself occupying a prominent place among the substantial capitalists of the East. He held positions of honor and trust. His opinion was asked concerning the investment of millions, and his advice eagerly accepted. He beautified and enriched his native town with libraries and other public buildings. Finally, perhaps, he would be asked to accept the gubernatorial chair of his native State.

Halstead's train of thought was Eastern in every detail; while Thurston's was of the West, crude and unconsidered, but revelling in magnificent possibilities.

In spite of the late hours they kept that night, the morning sun found them up before him and on their way

to the head of the valley. In the clayey soil of the slope, near the tunnel, glittering particles of gold were disclosed with every blow of the pick and with every shovelful upturned. The precious metal appeared in the form of coarse dust, bits as large as buckshot and occasional nuggets weighing an ounce and more. The earth was absolutely yellow with it, and, though they found no lumps as large as the one discovered by Halstead the evening before, Thurston declared it to be one of the richest diggings he had ever seen. He named the mound "Linn Hill," in honor of his partner, and said that while the elevation didn't make much of a hill, hills were so scarce in that country of mountains as to be worthy of particular mention whenever found.

The picking out of the nuggets and small lumps of gold from this hill of wealth was the most exciting and fascinating employment in which Linn Halstead had ever engaged, and he could not bear the thought of any interruption to the pursuit, however important it might seem. Still, the nuggets that they found bore the same relation to the coarse dust, which it was impossible for them to separate from the dry earth without washing, that the bits of citron do to the other good things combined in a rich plum pudding, and they quickly realized that they were leaving untouched a far greater amount of wealth than they were securing.

Finally, Thurston said: "This won't do, pard. The nugget is a good hoss for a spurt, but dust is the plug we want to tie to. What we need, and what we've got to have, is a cradle."

"A cradle?" cried Halstead. "Where are you going to find such a thing in this part of the country?"

"Make it," was the reply.

"But where shall we get the boards?"

"Make 'em."

"You don't mean that you propose to work boards out of logs with what tools we've got?" exclaimed Halstead in amazement.

"That's about the size of it," answered Thurston.

"But think of the time it will take, even if we succeed in doing it at all."

"I'd a heap rather think of the time it'll save after it's done. I've heerd tell of some old party who allowed as time was money. Now, while I don't know nothing about the heft of his pile, nor how much time he'd got tied into his dust-bag, I do know that when we've got a rocker made, I wouldn't take $10,000 for it. At that rate it looks to me as if the time it'll take to finish it would be worth to us blamed nigh enough money to start a bank with."

Halstead being at last persuaded by the other's earnestness to relinquish for a while the pleasant task of picking up gold for the unpleasant one of making a cradle out of crude material, they left the mound and started in search of a log suited to their purpose. As they had several pounds of gold in their buckskin dust-bags, the result of their morning's digging, they first went back to camp to deposit this in a place of safety. Then, taking the axe, hatchet, and saw with them, they visited a grove of large cedars, one of which soon fell beneath Thurston's vigor-

ous strokes. From the butt end of this he cut two lengths, one of six and one of two feet.

In the mean time Linn had been preparing a number of hardwood wedges, aided by which they now split three rough boards from each of these lengths. The three longer ones were to make the sides and bottom of the cradle, while two of the others were for the head and foot pieces. The remaining short board was split into two parts, one wider than the other, from which the rockers were to be made. It now remained to smooth these boards so that the joints of the machine should be tight, and to fit and fasten them together. As the smoothing had all to be done with axe and hatchet it was tedious work, and occupied the greater part of the following day.

They had no nails, but they were the fortunate possessors of a large gimlet, and all the fastening was done by wooden pins driven tightly into holes bored with this tool. The grating that was to go across the head of the cradle was made of oak twigs ingeniously plaited together by Thurston. The ends of the twigs were thrust into round holes bored in a square frame; and, as the work they soon put it to rapidly wore this out, Thurston's regular evening occupation for some time continued to be the plaiting of new gratings.

When the cradle was finally finished after four days of steady work, it was probably the rudest and most clumsy affair of the kind ever seen in the diggings, but it was substantial, and promised to serve their purpose. Thurston was especially proud of it, and as he meditatively

rocked it to and fro in front of the camp-fire on the evening of its completion, he remarked :

" This here outfit has cost us four days' worth of time. Calling that worth a $1000 a day makes $4000, which I suppose would be reckoned rather a steep price for a cradle even in Californy. Now that it's made, I value it at $10,000, which isn't more than a half, nor yet a quarter of what it's really worth. So you see, pard, we have made at the very lowest figgering $6000 in four days. Pretty good pay for carpenter work off here in the mountains, ain't it ?"

Halstead laughed at this method of calculating the amount of money they were making, but he found out before very long that it was more nearly correct than he at first supposed. The manner in which that rude cradle accumulated wealth for them after they once got it fairly to working was something marvellous.

They placed it in position on the bank of the rivulet near the foot of the mound, and while one supplied it with water dipped from the stream, the other shovelled the golden earth on to the grating or brought it from short distances in a bag made of elk-hide.

So rapid was the accumulation of golden dust that they were obliged to " clean up," or remove what was lodged against the riffle-bars at least four times a day, and sometimes oftener. In addition to what was obtained in this way, nearly as much more was picked up in the form of nuggets, and the deeper they penetrated into this treasure-house, the richer were its deposits.

Having no scales, they could only guess at the quantity

of gold they were collecting, until Halstead's ingenuity suggested a crude method of weighing it. He knew his own weight to be about a hundred and fifty pounds, and proposed to construct a pair of rude scales in which his body should balance an equal weight of gold. They had been at work about two weeks when he suggested this plan, and he felt almost certain that they had that amount of the precious metal.

The scales were made of a straight bar of oak suspended so that it was exactly balanced from the low limb of a tree. From each end of this bar depended a loop formed from a lariat, and Halstead passed one of these around his body. In the other was hung a stout sack of elk-hide containing a quantity of gold, to which Thurston added until its weight was sufficient to lift Halstead from the ground. Here, then, was one hundred and fifty pounds of gold, worth very nearly $30,000. But this was by no means all of it, and dividing the amount just weighed into two equal parts, they found that they had more than enough left to balance one of them. This weight was again divided and there was still enough on hand to balance half of it.

"Pard," said Thurston, seriously, as though overcome by the magnitude of their success, "in two weeks' time we've cleared $50,000, and Linn Hill is as fresh as a daisy. She hasn't turned a hair, and for all I can see she's good for a ten years' run at the same pace. It's turrible, pard! It's turrible to try and figger out our annual income if we continue to do business at this rate for that length of time. Why, it would be—! Well,

pard, I reckon I won't count it for fear I should get to putting on wealthy airs, in which case I'd have to kick myself, or ask you to kindly kick me for being a galoot. It won't do, pard! No, sir, it won't do, and can't be stood. So, if you notice me getting anyways snifty or piling on any lugs in this here camp, you just bump me down hard once or twice. You'll do it, pard, won't you?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Halstead, laughing at the other's serious tone. "I'll do my best to prevent any demoralization of the camp by the assumption of superior airs on account of mere wealth."

"That's it, pard!" cried Thurston. "You've struck a rich lead of words, and they fills the bill to a T-y-ty. That 'demoral' feller is a tough one; but you bet he's a slayer, and I'll back him every time."

"Thirsty," said Linn, looking up from a brown study in which he had been indulging before the camp-fire on the evening of the weighing, "what are we going to do with this gold, and how are we to get it to San Francisco?"

"Well," replied the miner, "I reckon when we've scooped in such a pile as is considered enough, or when circumstances is such that we're obliged to let up on this fortune-making for a while, we'll have to go into the settlements for mules to pack the dinero home on. For the present, and till the *mulada* is corralled, we'd better dig a hole somewheres and bury it."

"But won't travelling through the country with a mule-train of gold be pretty risky business?"

"Now you're shoutin', pard! Risky is the word, and nothing less than an escort of alcaldes will make it anything else. That's where the fun comes in, and where I'm up a tree. If you remember, I mentioned that it was harder to play a rich man's hand than one that was dealt by genteel poverty, and wealthy cards is the hand we're holding now."

They discussed this problem for some time, but could arrive at no decision, except that, for the present, it would be well to arrange some secure hiding-place and leave their gold in it until such time as they could remove it with safety.

In accordance with this plan they made a number of strong bags of deer and elk-skin, each of which would hold about fifty pounds, and into these they put their gold as fast as it was collected. One of these bags was always in the process of being filled, and was kept in the tent. Two they deposited in a hole dug beneath their fireplace, and the rest they removed to some distance and buried in a thicket close under the cliffs at one side of the valley. This Thurston called the "Bank."

At the end of six weeks of incessant toil they began to grow weary of even such fascinating labor as digging gold, which is, after all, one of the most toilsome and monotonous pursuits in the world. Not being misers, they longed for an opportunity to spend their wealth and enjoy it. They longed to see and mingle with other men, while the beautiful valley began to lose its charms and to seem like a prison to them. Their steady diet of venison became extremely distasteful, and they longed for a

change of food. Their clothing was ragged and dirty. They wondered what was going on in the outside world. They could think of a thousand reasons why they should leave the valley, and, in a word, as Thurston expressed it, they were "sick for a change."

It was while they were feeling thus, and had about made up their minds to leave the valley at the end of the week, taking what gold they could carry, and leaving the rest in its hiding-place, that a startling incident occurred. One afternoon, as Halstead was languidly rocking the cradle, and thinking how much he detested this gold-getting, he heard a sudden startled exclamation from his partner, who had just crawled out from a deep hole near by in which he had been digging. As the young man looked up, he saw Thurston, with his body half-way out of the excavation, gazing fixedly at the top of the cliffs that encircled their valley, and called out to know what was the matter.

"It is, or it was, for he dropped just as I caught sight of him, a man standing up there watching us," replied Thurston.

"There he is now!" he cried, excitedly, "but whether he's an Injun or a white man, I'm blamed if I can make out."

Looking in the direction indicated by his partner, Halstead also plainly distinguished a human figure outlined against the sky, but he, too, was unable to determine its character.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CLOUD-BURST AND A ROBBERY.

Investigating a Suspicious Character.—Linn is Decoyed from the Valley.—Struck Senseless.—An Awful Storm.—Thirsty Meets a Polite Stranger.—Hunting for a Lost Partner.—The Empty "Bank."—Imprisoned.

THE human figure that had so startled Thurston and Halstead remained in sight for a minute or so before disappearing, and then, though they watched for some time, they did not see it again.

This incident afforded them an exciting topic of conversation, and also so diverted their attention from all other matters that upon attempting to resume their labors they found it impossible to do so. They could only watch the edge of the cliffs with feelings of mingled apprehension and curiosity and speculate concerning what they had seen.

Long before this they had captured the truant mustang, as well as his companion, the wild horse, and with the four animals thus in their possession they expected to be able to remove the greater part, if not all of their treasure from the valley when they got ready to leave it. They always kept one animal picketed near the camp ready for use in hunting or in driving up the others when they should be wanted.

On the day that their labors were interrupted by the appearance of the first human being they had seen for

two months, Thurston's mustang happened to be the animal that was kept up. The sight of him seemed to suggest an idea to the miner, for as they gave up trying to work and returned to camp, he said,

"Pard, I can't rest easy till I find out what sort of neighbors is spying down on us, and I've a notion to take that hoss and go on a little prospecting trip up there." Here he pointed to the verge of the surrounding cliffs.

"I don't think that's a bad idea," replied Halstead; "but, if you go at all, it seems to me it would be wiser to go on foot. I think, too, that I ought to go with you."

"No, pard, that won't never do. One of us has got to stay here sure. If you want to go I'll stay, but if you'll stay I'll go, and go afoot too, for, as you say, a hoss would only be in the way, 'specially as I shouldn't think of travelling far. If you should get into any trouble while I was gone, I wouldn't be out of sound of a gun, which, if I heerd it, I'd be back again in less 'n no time. Also if you heerd any guns being fired up there, you might make a *pasear* through the tunnel and take a hand in the game. I don't reckon, though, there's going to be any trouble, for I don't calkerlate to get into no muss, nor yet to be seen. I'm going to lie low, and I'll be back quick as I discover what kind of critters has found us out."

"Well," said Halstead, "I hate to have you go, but I suppose it's the best thing to be done. I wish," he added, reflectively, "that we were safely out of this Golden Valley and on our way back to the settlements."

"So do I, pard," answered Thurston, "and we'll go, too, just as quick as I find out the road's clear. You'd better be getting up the stock and kinder making preparations while I'm up there. It'll give you something to think of and keep you from fretting."

Taking his rifle and revolver with him, Thurston started on his scouting expedition, and Halstead went with him as far as the mouth of the tunnel, to close the barrier of bushes after he had passed through.

With a fervent hand-clasp between the partners, the big miner disappeared under the curtain of rock and began his hazardous undertaking. Halstead made his way back to camp, feeling greatly depressed by the loneliness of his surroundings, and casting apprehensive glances at the edge of the cliffs as he walked. He had but one feeling of pleasure, which was the remembrance that they were soon to leave the valley that had become so distasteful to him. As the first step toward this he saddled Kangaroot and went out to drive in the other animals. It took half an hour to accomplish this, and before the task was finished he noticed that the sun had disappeared behind a mass of ink-black clouds that were rolling up from the west.

The young man's loneliness was increased by the gathering gloom, and he wished his partner would return. In his uneasiness he walked toward the tunnel with the hope of meeting him. As he reached the place where they had been at work a distant shout caused him to look up.

On the verge of the cliff, near where the former figure

had appeared, stood a man, apparently beckoning to him, and faintly but distinctly the words, "Halloa, pard! Come up here!" were borne to his ears.

Without doubting for a moment that Thurston was calling him, and wanted him to make haste, and forgetting that he was unarmed, except for the revolver that always hung at his belt, Halstead started to obey the summons. Running to the mouth of the tunnel, he pulled down a portion of the barrier which, remembering that all the animals were secured, he did not stop to replace, and ascended with all speed the long incline.

Reaching the point at which, nearly two months before, they had entered the depression, he left it on the opposite side, and started toward the place where he supposed his partner to be. He had gone but a few steps when a twig snapped behind him, and as he hastily turned to discover the cause of the noise, a cruel blow on the head stretched him senseless on the ground.

When Linn Halstead slowly recovered consciousness some time later, he found himself blindfolded, bound hand and foot, and sitting on the ground with his back against a tree. He thought he heard voices and the sound of horses' hoofs, and he called out feebly for help. There was no response, and the sounds quickly died away, leaving a breathless stillness in which not even a leaf seemed to stir. The air was lifeless and heavy, and breathing became so difficult that the young man fainted away and was again unconscious of his surroundings. When next he recovered a few great drops of water were plashing on his face, and with a roar that shook the solid

earth a terrific thunder-clap burst above his head. Then the rain fell in such torrents as he had never dreamed of. It instantly drenched him to the skin, but at the same time it cooled his throbbing head, that felt as though compassed by a band of molten iron.

After a while he succeeded, by violently rubbing his head up and down against the rough bark of the tree, in loosening the bandage over his eyes so that it fell off. There was an instant feeling of relief, though he was still in a darkness that was only intensified by the blinding sheets of lightning playing incessantly about him.

In the contemplation of his own situation and sufferings Halstead had hardly noticed the tempest that was now raging with such mad, inconceivable fury. One crash of thunder followed another almost without intermission. A furious wind swept through the forest with irresistible force, laying low scores of its stately trees. Above all the rain fell in a deluge that seemed as though it must drown the world.

The young man bowed his head before this outburst of wild elements and resigned himself to his fate. He had no hope of long escaping the deadly bolts that struck in all directions about him, or the reeling trees that crashed on all sides. At the same time he was conscious of a languid curiosity concerning a steady, grinding roar, mingled with inexplicable sounds of a hollow, booming nature that came from but a short distance away. It was an awful sound, and it gradually oppressed him with a feeling of terror.

The storm passed almost as suddenly as it had come,

the rain ceased to fall, the fierce wind was succeeded by a great calm, the western sky was reddened by the last glow of sunset, and only a few muttered growls of thunder were tossed suddenly from one gloomy peak of the high Sierras to another. Still, the strange grinding sound, mingled with that of rushing waters, was continued, and, contrasted with the surrounding stillness, it was more fearful than before.

Although Linn Halstead did not know it, the sound was that of tons of gravel and hurrying boulders splintered from bare peaks by the lightning, or torn from their resting-places by mad waters, and hurled down the trough-like depression that led to the Golden Valley.

The terrible cloud-burst had conferred one benefit upon the young man. Its drenching waters had so soaked the rawhide thong that bound his wrists that it at last yielded to his efforts and his hands were free. He fumbled long over the knot that secured his ankles, but it finally came undone, and, staggering to his feet, he walked blindly away through the forest. He knew not where he was going, and his only object, so far as he had one, was to escape from that sound of awful grinding. For hours he walked, stumbled, or crept on hands and knees until trees no longer surrounded him. He had left the sound far behind, and with a great sigh he sank down in the wet grass and almost instantly fell into the deep sleep of utter exhaustion.

In the mean time, Thirsty Thurston, upon emerging from the narrow depression that led up from the valley, had quickly discovered a plainly-marked trail of hoof-prints leading away from it. As they seemed to have

been recently made, and the animal had evidently been walking slowly, he was tempted to follow them cautiously for nearly a mile. Then, far ahead through the tree-trunks he saw a horseman, who was still too distant for him to distinguish whether he was a white man or an Indian. In the hope of settling this important question, he tried to obtain a closer view of the rider without being himself observed ; but, hurry as he would, it was for some time impossible for him to do so, and he was thus insensibly led several miles farther away from the valley.

At last he rounded a thicket that had for a few moments concealed the horseman from him, and found himself face to face with a strange white man who was standing beside his horse adjusting a stirrup leather.

The stranger grected Thurston cordially, and, after expressing surprise at seeing him there, asked if he was not one of the men who were at work in the valley back a few miles on the trail over which they had just come.

Feeling that a denial would be useless, the miner admitted that he was, and asked if the stranger was the man who had stood on the edge of the cliffs and looked down upon them that afternoon.

The other replied in the affirmative, and said that if he had been able to discover any way of getting down to them he should have paid them a visit. He also said that he was prospecting alone through that part of the mountains, and had struck a lead in a cañon about five miles beyond there, where his camp was located, and where he had about decided to spend a month or so. He was returning from an unsuccessful deer-hunt when

he stumbled across their valley, and was delighted to discover that he had white neighbors in that wild region. There was plenty of gold where he was working, much more than he could possibly handle, and if the two partners chose to join forces with him they would be made heartily welcome. Did the other think his horse a fine one? Well, yes, it was a passable beast. He had imported it from England and ridden it across the plains the year before.

With his suspicions totally disarmed by the stranger's manner and plausible account of himself, and rejoicing that he had persisted in his pursuit until he had discovered the friendly character of the man whose appearance had so startled them, Thurston politely bade his new acquaintance good day and started to retrace his steps.

The stranger smiled grimly as he watched the honest miner nearly out of sight and then cautiously began to follow him. To himself he said, "Well, there wasn't anything but plain sailing about that job after all, and I thought it was going to be a dead beat to windward all the way."

Noticing the gathering storm, and perceiving from the appearance of the sky that it promised to be of an unusual character, Thurston made all haste to regain the valley before it should burst. In spite of his efforts, the rain was descending in sheets when he emerged from the lower end of the tunnel, in which the rivulet had already assumed such volume and force as to nearly sweep him off his footing. The barrier had been torn from in front of the entrance, but if the miner thought of this at al

he attributed the fact to the strength of the little torrent.

He wondered at seeing no sign of the horses about the camp, and was still more surprised to find that his partner was absent from it. He fancied that perhaps Halstead had experienced difficulty in collecting the animals, and, being caught by the storm in some distant part of the valley, had sought shelter from its pitiless force in some rocky cleft or thick grove of trees. So he waited patiently for the storm to abate and found full employment in a fruitless effort to protect their belongings from the drenching rain.

Even in that sheltered place the fury of the tempest was appalling, and, above the tremendous roar that filled the air, Thurston caught occasional echoes of that hollow, grinding sound that had so terrified poor Linn. Although he could not account for it, it filled him with a strange foreboding of evil, that was strengthened when in the stillness that succeeded the elemental rage it was continued. Before it ceased Thurston had found some dry pine splinters with which he started a fire. He also fired a couple of shots from his revolver to let his partner know of his return, and then he waited impatiently for his coming. As minutes passed, and then an hour, he grew seriously alarmed, and fired other shots at five-minute intervals. After each one he listened anxiously for some answering signal, but no sound broke the ominous silence.

All at once, moved by a sudden impulse, he seized a blazing brand from the fire and examined the interior of

the little tent. His partner's rifle occupied its accustomed place, a fact that he could not reconcile with his absence, and he also discovered that the partially-filled sack of gold had disappeared.

His worst apprehensions were realized. The camp had been robbed, and his much-loved young partner had in all probability been murdered. How could this thing have been done during his short absence, and by whom? It never occurred to the honest fellow that he had been purposely decoyed away in order that the deed might be the more easily accomplished.

Armed with blazing firebrands the miner searched every foot of the grove in which the camp stood, for his partner's body. Failing to find it he returned to the fire and flung himself down in front of it to wait with feverish impatience for daylight. The slow hours dragged away and at length it came. With its first glow Thurston was tramping the length and breadth of the valley in a vain search for his friend.

When at mid-day he returned to the little camp haggard and completely exhausted, he had discovered three things: First, that Linn Halstead was not alive within the limits of the valley, though his dead body might lie beneath the sparkling waters of the lake. Second, that whoever had made way with him had been familiar both with the locality and with their secrets, for, not only had the gold in the tent been taken, but the "Bank" had been broken into and robbed of all its contents.

The third discovery, which was only less terrible than

the loss of his partner, was, that the tunnel through which they had entered was completely filled, beyond any hope of re opening, with a solid, impenetrable mass of gravel and great boulders. The Golden Valley had indeed become a prison, and Thirsty Thurston was its sole occupant.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY.

Mr. Bowers and his Friends.—They Decide to Prospect on their Own Account.—Bodfish Deserts the Party.—An Outline of his Subsequent Career.—Regaining the Clue.—Watching the Golden Valley.—The Robbery is Planned and Carried Out.—Wake-up Tedder is Left to his Fate.

THE sad interruption of the peaceful prosperity of the Golden Valley, described in the preceding chapter, was, if the cloud-burst be left out of the question, wholly due to the well-considered and successfully carried-out schemes of three unscrupulous men. They have already been introduced, and will be readily recognized under the names of Wake-up Tedder, or "Tedfish," as he was now called by his companions, Royal Bowers, and Asa Hart. Bodfish was not with them.

When they lost the trail of the two men they had been following, these worthies continued on for a long distance up the river in the hope of recovering it. They went, in fact, almost to the head-waters of the stream in the high Sierras, besides exploring a number of tributary branches, before finally abandoning their search in that direction. They hoped that some of these might lead to the valley in whose existence they had such firm faith, and which they were so determined to find. The several small parties of mountain Indians whom they met were closely questioned as to the presence of other

white men in that region; but, beyond hearing of great numbers of overland emigrants swarming through the passes, nothing was learned from this source.

In this manner they spent several weeks, occasionally stopping to prospect and pick up a little gold, but generally in too irritable a state of mind over their disappointment, and too anxious to prosecute their search, to work steadily or care to stop long in one place. Silas Bodfish was particularly disgusted with this unfruitful chase and its accompanying hardships. He detested work, and longed for the opportunity of exercising his wits upon more industrious men, who were also unsuspecting, and could be made to work for him. Thus, when, in retracing their way down the river, the party came again to the creek up which our friends had travelled, and Mr. Bowers, pronouncing it a likely looking place, proposed to prospect its cañon, Bodfish promptly vetoed the proposition. He said the rest might do as they liked, but, for his part, he wasn't going to fool around in these mountains any longer. He should return to the settlements without any further waste of time.

In making this statement Mr. Bodfish did not mention a little private scheme that he was considering in connection with the parchment map of the Golden Valley of which he had some time before managed to obtain possession. So he separated from his fellow conspirators on the following morning. Within a month he had so worked upon the excited imaginations of a number of new arrivals in San Francisco with his tales of the Golden Valley and its fabulous wealth, that he had organized a

company to take possession of and work it, and had sold them the map for $10,000. With their purchase he threw in a detailed description of the country in the vicinity of the Golden Valley, and of the exact route to be followed in reaching it, together with the location of the map's starting-point. All of this, though invented and written by himself, he claimed to have gleaned from rare manuscripts in one of the old Missions.

While swindlers of every degree and description have flourished in every age, and among all people, there was never a more fruitful field for their operations than that of California. Their bait was never more temptingly gilded, and their victims were never more eager to be taken in. All this was quickly recognized by the astute and unscrupulous Mr. Bodfish, and for some time he trod joyously the easy paths of trickery and deceit that opened so invitingly before him.

While he was thus prosperous and happy in evil doing, the companions whom he had left in the mountains were rejoicing over his absence, for they had made a notable discovery, the benefits of which they must have shared with him had he remained with them. Acting upon the suggestion of Mr. Bowers, they had prospected up the bed of the creek, and had been astonished to find indications that other white men had preceded them there not long before. At last they reached the spring that boiled up in the middle of the stream and there discovered something that altered all their plans and put an end to their prospecting.

Halstead and Thurston had been obliged to cut down

several trees before they could get their animals up the steep side of the cañon at this point, and these now remained as sign-posts to mark their route. Mr. Bowers was quick to detect them, and, for the first time, the thought flashed into his mind that the white men who had passed that way, and who had cut down those trees, might be the very two who had eluded them some weeks before. He at once communicated this idea to his companions, and, eagerly seizing upon the suggestion, they determined to follow up this new clue.

Their discovery of the Golden Valley and of our friends resulted almost as a matter of course, and as they stood on the verge of its cliffs and gazed down into the beautiful depression, at the same time carefully concealing themselves from the view of those below, their exultation knew no bounds. They could recognize the forms, though not the features, of the two men whom they saw at work far beneath them, and were thus assured that they had indeed gained, by the merest accident, the very spot for which they had so long and eagerly sought.

There was no need of haste in their movements now. There was the gold, and others were hard at work digging it for them. They could well afford to wait for a while and mature their plans for gaining possession of and removing it, when they were satisfied that a sufficient quantity had been collected.

For some time they were puzzled, as our friends had been, to discover an entrance to the valley, and, like them, they spent several days in a vain exploration of its encircling wall of rock. They, however, had the advantage

of knowing that those now down there had recently entered the place, and so they had no reason to doubt the existence of a gateway, or that they should in time discover it.

At last, while out hunting one day, Mr. Bowers stumbled across the trough-like depression far up on the mountain side. Having the curiosity to follow it, he found himself in the valley, and almost discovered by the two men at work near its upper end, before he realized where it was taking him.

Again did the conspirators have cause for exultation, and now they began to seriously consider their future plans. Their camp was some distance removed from the cliffs and carefully hidden, but it commanded a view of the path leading to the tunnel, and from it one man always watched this place. Another might have been seen at almost any hour of the day lying at full length on the edge of the cliffs, and regarding the movements of those below him who were so hard at work and so utterly unconscious of this espionage.

Once, sheltered by darkness, they ventured into the valley, and so close to the little camp in the oak grove that they could distinguish the conversation of its occupants and hear Thurston detailing some of his plans regarding the "Tower of 'Frisco." On their way back they stopped at the diggings on Linn Hill, and after feeling about for some time in the dim light, succeeded in picking up a few specimens of the gold it contained.

They thus obtained a thorough knowledge of the locality and of all the movements of those who were ex-

tracting its wealth for their benefit. They even discovered the "Bank" by watching when the partners carried the sacks of gold to that hiding-place.

When they were satisfied that as much gold had been collected as they could carry away, even with the help of the animals belonging to the partners, which they determined to secure, a great discussion arose among the three men regarding the best course for them to adopt. Wake-up Tedder's brutal suggestion, that they should first make way with Thurston and Halstead, and then take the property at their leisure, was at once overruled by his companions. They were bad men, but they were not bad enough to commit the cold-blooded murder that he proposed. As Mr. Bowers remarked:

"No, sir! This business has got to be done in a gentlemanly and high-toned way, or I cuts the whole shop. Royal Bowers ain't none of your shooting, thieving galoots, that would kill a white man for his pile like he would an Injun, for the fun of the thing. When he finds it necessary to borrow a few ounces of dust, he does it from some duck who knows right where to go to work and dig enough more to make the loan good. Yes, sir, Royal Bowers is a gentleman, if he is sometimes found in company with sharps and 'agents.'"

While uttering these sentiments the speaker looked expressively at Wake-up Tedder, whom he thoroughly despised and hated, and there might have been trouble in that camp had the man from the West dared to resent his remarks with anything more formidable than words. As he was about to reply Asa Hart hastily interrupted him, and said:

"My friend Bowers is right. We won't have any killing or rowdy business, but we will sail right in and win all the same." Then he unfolded a plan that he had carefully thought out, and that seemed to him perfectly feasible.

It provided that the two men should be decoyed from the valley by the appearance of himself or one of his companions on the edge of the cliffs. He relied upon their curiosity, or their apprehensions, to bring them up in the hope of discovering who had thus found them out. He, being unknown to either of them, would then undertake to lead them to a considerable distance, while his companions entered the valley and secured the treasure. There would be little chance of their being overtaken, even if discovered and followed, for they were mounted, while their pursuers would be afoot. He would rejoin his companions at the spring in the creek, and had no fear that they would decamp with his share of the spoils, for there was but one road from the place, and he knew that he could travel faster than the heavily-laden animals bearing the plunder.

After much discussion this plan was adopted, with such results as have already been described. The figure first seen on the cliffs by the partners was that of Mr. Bowers, and after disappearing from their view he still watched their movements from a place of concealment.

The conspirators were somewhat disappointed when Thurston came up alone and started to follow the trail prepared for him by Asa Hart. Mr. Bowers was, however, equal to the emergency, and succeeded by a second

appearance and a shout in decoying Halstead also into the trap. There was no time to entice the young man to any distance, for, according to their programme, the gold must be secured and removed before Thurston's return. Mr. Bowers had not decided what should be done with him when the question was settled by Wake-up Tedder's cowardly blow from behind. After tying and blindfolding the young man, they set him against a tree, where they left him to recover as best he might, trusting that after they had got safely away his partner would find and release him.

Halstead became semi-conscious just in time to hear the voices of the two men and the sound of their horses' hoofs as they left the valley and fled with the stolen wealth. His second period of insensibility prevented him from hearing, and making his presence known to Thurston, as the miner passed but a short distance from him on his hurried return, nor was he noticed by Asa Hart, who followed a few minutes later and hastened to rejoin his companions.

The removal of the gold found in the tent and in the "Bank" by Tedder and Bowers, was greatly facilitated by the horses and mule having been driven up and made ready for that very purpose by Halstead after Thurston's departure. They had known nothing of the two sacks buried beneath the fireplace, but all the rest, to the value of over $200,000, they found and removed, though the strength of the four animals belonging to the partners, as well as those they had been riding, was severely taxed to accomplish it.

Asa Hart performed his part of the programme so much more easily and quickly than he had anticipated, that he overtook his companions just as they were entering a clump of cedars near the northern edge of the valley to seek shelter from the terrible storm that had burst upon them a few minutes before. Here they made camp as best they could, and unloaded the terror-stricken animals, which were rendered almost unmanageable by the terrific thunder and blinding flashes of lightning. One of them did succeed in breaking loose and dashing madly away; nor did they again recover her, for the runaway was Linn Halstead's mare Fanita. They were obliged to remain here all night, and a miserable night it proved, for, drenched and shivering as they were, they dared not light a fire for fear lest it should reveal their presence to Thurston, of whose imprisonment they were as yet unaware. They suspected it, however, when in the morning they saw, together with other traces of the ruin and devastation wrought by the storm, the great pile of débris that had washed into the upper end of the valley and was heaped about the mouth of the tunnel. They also caught glimpses of a human figure far below them which they knew must be that of Thurston.

"I swear, I believe the fellow is shut up in that place and can't get out!" exclaimed Asa Hart. "If that's so it seems about the same as murder to go off and leave him there."

"Oh, let him alone!" said Wake-up Tedder. "He's all right, or if he ain't who cares? He went down there of his own free will, didn't he? No one didn't obligate

him to as I knows of. We've got suthin else to 'tend to 'sides other folks' business. 'Tending to number one is all I kin do."

Two weeks later, as Wake-up Tedder lay sick and uncared for in a recently-started mining-camp miles away from the Golden Valley, he thought bitterly of these words and wished he had never uttered them. He was no longer able to " 'tend to number one," and there seemed to be nobody willing to help him with the job. His unacclimated frame had been so weakened by many hardships, that when attacked by a low fever, the seeds of which were sown during that night of storm, wet, and cold in the mountains, it had no strength to withstand it. His companions in crime had taken advantage of his situation to desert him, and with them had gone forever, so far as he was concerned, every ounce of the stolen wealth for which he had risked and suffered so much.

Once in a while some miner would thrust his shaggy head under the slight shelter of branches beneath which the sick man lay and look at him. Perhaps he would bring a drink of water or a morsel of coarse food, that the sufferer could not eat, but this happened rarely. Those around him were all too busy " 'tending to number one." to look after him.

The fierce heat of the sun dried his blood and caused his brain to reel with a thousand wild fancies. The stifling breeze, hot as a furnace blast, whirled little clouds of red dust over him. He tried to call for water, and his parched tongue refused to obey him.

Strange forms seemed to gather about him. He saw

Moore, the young carpenter, whom he had left to die on the Isthmus. He saw Linn Halstead, whom he had struck to the earth on that terrible day in the mountains. He saw Thirsty Thurston, the big, warm-hearted miner, left to linger out a miserable existence in the far-away rock-walled valley, and he shrieked with horror as they moved forward and bent over him.

CHAPTER XX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Linn Halstead in an Indian Rancheria.—His Curious Medical Attendant.—Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly.—Erin, the "Harse."—The Young Miner's Recovery.—He and the Doctor Visit the Golden Valley.—It is Closed Against them.—Linn Discovers his Partner Just as he Disappears.

WHEN Linn Halstead next began to think, after having fallen asleep on the wet grass at the edge of the forest, he gazed about him with a languid curiosity, and wondered when this strange dream would end. Why should he dream of lying on a couch of furs in a hut of branches, and of an Indian standing beside him and speaking English with a broad Irish brogue? It was too absurd!

As he mentally strove to shake off these fancies, and to rouse himself to the contemplation of some more familiar object, he suddenly became aware that he was not in a dream after all. His supposed fancies were realities, and the strangest individual he had ever seen was talking to him. His mind was still so dazed that the words spoken by this person conveyed no meaning to him, and he simply lay still, gazing wonderingly at the man.

This only other occupant of the hut was well worth gazing at as a curiosity. He was dressed in shirt and breeches of buckskin, elaborately fringed and beaded, but also worn, ragged, and dirty to a degree. A stubby red beard and a shock of fiery hair covered his face and head,

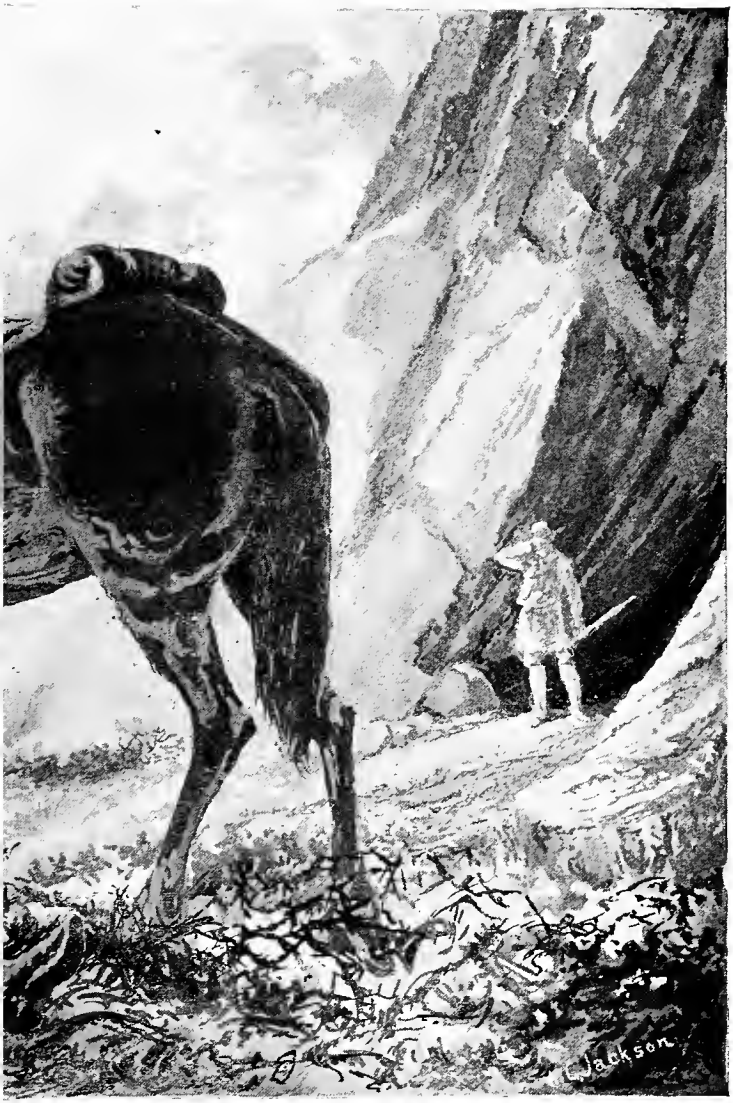
which were surmounted and framed by a great Mexican sombrero. The heavy braid that had edged the brim of this vast hat now hung from it in a fringe that gave it a most unique appearance. The man's eyes were concealed behind a pair of blue glasses, his feet and lower limbs were encased in huge boots that reached above his knees and supported at their heels a pair of immense jingling spurs. A big revolver and a big knife, besides several other curious objects, the use of which Linn could not possibly conceive, hung from the leathern belt that encircled his waist. The man was as big as Thurston, and everything about him was big, except his voice, which, owing to some defect in his vocal organs, was absurdly shrill, not to say "squeaky." The incongruity of his appearance was completed by a silver drinking-cup that he held in one great hand while he violently stirred its contents with a very small silver spoon grasped in the other.

As he stopped talking to taste the mixture he had been stirring, Linn took advantage of the silence to ask weakly, "Will you kindly tell me, sir, what has happened, and where I am, and how it comes that I am being taken care of by a stranger?"

"A stranger, is it!" cried the other. "I a stranger! Young man, ye must allow me to differ wid ye on that point, for, having known Saysar O'Reilly intimately for two and forty years, I'll take me oath he's no stranger. Ye axed where ye were? Now, isn't that a question for one sinsible man to be axin of another, when wid your own eyes ye can see that it's here ye are? And is it what

Golden Days.—Pages 214-215.

FANITA


G. Jackson

has happened? Divil a wurrud do I know, and it's burning wid curiosity I am to be axin the same question.

"All I know consarning the affair is that, three days ago, in the marning, as I was taking a stroll on harseback and studying the effects of a typhoon, or a monsoon, or whativer it may be named in this country, of which I had taken notice the praceding night, I observed a harse, which proved to be a mare, standing on the edge of a bit of a perrairie forninst the timber beyant. Approaching cautiously I made further discovery of yoursilf lying on the ground beside the harse, dead to all appearance, as drenched wid the wet as a sponge, and wid a head on ye that looked as though ye had been thrying conclusions wid a stone wall. Having some natural curiosity consarning cases of the kind, I made free to remove your body to me house, where, thanks to me suparior medical attainments, ye are now doing quite well."

Poor Linn had only partially understood this rambling explanation, but he had caught the stranger's name, and it, together with the concluding sentence of his remarks, seemed to suggest a train of thought, for he roused up and asked, with a faint smile :

"Do you keep the hotel?"

"Do I kape!— Oh, murther, he's aff again!" cried Dr. O'Reilly in despair, for, strange as were his appearance and surroundings, he was a *bona fide* M.D., and a skilful one at that. "Here, lad, swallow this, and perhaps it'll restore your rason, though I've but small hopes

of it, small hopes of it, when ye'd mistake me for a tavern-kaper."

Linn swallowed the bitter draught presented to him, and almost immediately fell into a quiet sleep, from which he awoke a few hours later greatly refreshed, hungry, and with his mind as strong and clear as ever. He felt that he could get up and walk if he only tried. By a strong effort of will-power he did succeed in rising from the couch of skins and making his way with unsteady steps to the entrance of the hut.

He had heard the sound of many voices, above which rose the barking of dogs and the screams of children at play, and now he saw whence they proceeded. A small grassy hollow, shaded by tall trees, nestled between two great spurs that reached out like knees from the lofty mountain to which they belonged. A tiny stream babbled prettily across it, and on one side of this stood the hut in which he was lodged. On the other side were a score of similar structures, in and about which men lounged lazily, women were preparing the evening meal, and children and dogs tumbled together in promiscuous heaps. It was a rancheria of mountain Indians, happy in their wild freedom and not yet cursed by the baneful influence of white civilization.

Bending over a small fire near the stream, directly in front of the hut, was the curious individual whose acquaintance Halstead had made some hours before. Judging from the clouds of steam, and the savory odors that rose above his fire, he, too, was preparing supper, and the young man wished with all his heart that it was ready.

A slight noise that he made attracted the attention of Dr. O'Reilly. Looking up and seeing Halstead, he sprang to his feet and made a rush at him, exclaiming, in a voice that would have been terrible but for its ludicrous thinness, "How dare ye, sir, lave your couch without orders from your medical attindant? Lie down at once, sir, and don't lift your head until ye recave permission from me! I'm not accustomed, sir, to such insorbordination amang me patients."

With this the big doctor clutched at the young man as though about to annihilate him, and then led him back to the bed, where he proceeded to make him comfortable with the utmost tenderness. A few minutes later he brought in a bowl of delicious broth, which he fed to Halstead as though the latter were a baby, at the same time exclaiming, "Eat that, sir! No remarks! Down it goes! I'll take no refusal!"

Linn was beginning to understand this queer doctor, and, as he did not require the slightest urging to induce him to take the broth, he meekly swallowed all that was allowed him without a word. At the same time his nurse kept up a running fire of command and remonstrance, as though he were the most rebellious of patients.

After the doctor had eaten his own supper, and as he sat in the door-way of his hut placidly smoking a great pipe, Halstead ventured to ask him if he were prospecting for gold.

To his amazement, instead of answering this simple question, the eccentric Irishman sprang to his feet, dropping his pipe, and, hastily pouring out a mixture from a

bottle into the silver cup, he thrust it at Linn, roaring shrilly:

"Drink that, ye spalpeen! Drink that! Maybe it'll save ye before your mind's gone entirely."

But Linn felt that he had had enough of medicine and ventured to decline the proffered draught, expecting, of course, to be roundly abused for so doing. Instead of this the doctor only remarked, mildly, "Very well, if ye won't ye won't, and I suppose I must put up wid your foolishness." He thereupon resumed his seat and relighted his pipe with a great sigh as though at such inconceivable obstinacy. After a while he said:

"So, ye first took me for a tavern-kaper, and then for a goold-digger? Well, sir, I scorn the imputation conveyed in them questions. I have nayther the qualifications for the one nor the inclination, let alone the time to waste upon it, for the other purshoot. I'd have ye to understand, sir, that Saysar O'Reilly, M.D., of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, has devoted his life to science and to the investigation of natural problems that laves him no time for the acquirement of filthy lucre."

He continued in the same strain for nearly an hour without once pausing or allowing his guest an opportunity to speak. Halstead did not mind this, for the other's remarks were so thoroughly original and entertaining that he enjoyed listening to them. He thus learned that while Dr. O'Reilly scorned California as a mere gold-producing country, he regarded it as one of the richest fields in the world for natural research. He

revelled in its strange geological formations, its entomology and its flora, in studying the customs of its aboriginal inhabitants, for which purpose he had spent much time in their rancherias, and, above all, in the grand phenomena of its lofty mountain ranges, over which he was most enthusiastic.

He had crossed the plains some months before with a company of emigrants, with whom he had also spent some time in the mountains before descending to the settlements. He had only gone as far as Sutter's Fort, where his horse, a valuable animal brought from the States, had been stolen. This so disgusted him with the class of adventurers found in that part of the country that as soon as he had procured another animal he had returned to the mountains, where he could share the peaceful life of his Indian friends and pursue his favorite studies undisturbed by the turmoil of the diggings. He was extremely bitter against the thief who had stolen his horse, which he called "Erin," and uttered many and dire threats against him in case he ever again met him.

"To think," he cried, "I had me eye on the villain as he was riding aff as cool as ye plaze, and yet hadn't the heart to give him the bullet he desarved. But I marked him in me mind. I marked him, and he'll not escape me asy the next time."

Cæsar O'Reilly's heart was as big as his body, and he was the strangest mixture of shrewdness and unsophisticated innocence, caution and impetuosity, self-assertion and diffidence, that Halstead had ever encountered. He was intensely interested in Linn's story, which, however,

only extended to the moment the young man had left the trough-like depression leading out from the Golden Valley. He knew nothing of the blow that had been struck him, and had no knowledge of how he reached the place where the big doctor had found him, nor what had become of his partner, Thirsty Thurston. Dr. O'Reilly had kept him under the influence of sleeping potions for two days, thereby giving his brain a complete rest and a chance to recover from its terrible shock. By so doing he had probably warded off an attack of brain-fever and restored his patient to a normal condition in the shortest possible time. In suggesting a cause for the attack upon the young man, he said :

"Some murthering villain must have knocked ye aff your harse wid the intention of staling her."

"But I had no horse. I was on foot," answered Halstead.

"Didn't I find a harse standing beside ye?" demanded the doctor.

"Well, I don't know whose it was," replied Halstead. "I certainly left my horse in the valley, and to-morrow I must go back to her and to my partner. Poor Thirsty will be wondering what can have become of me since yesterday."

"Since yesterday!" cried the other. "Why, lad, it's three days now since I found ye, and Lord knows how long ye'd been wandering before that. I know the valley well, though I never could find a way into it, and it's well-nigh ten miles from here. No, no, lad! Ye'll not be able to travel that far to-morrow, but, if ye'll kape

quiet for the day and gain strength, I'll go wid ye the day after, and deliver ye safe into the hands of your partner."

As Halstead realized the truth of the doctor's words in regard to his weakness, and also remembered that it would be impossible for him to find the valley again without a guide, he promised to follow the other's directions. At the same time, as he lay on the couch of furs that night his thoughts were with the partner for whom he had conceived so deep an affection. What had Thurston imagined when he returned to their camp and found it deserted? What had he done, and where was he now? Had any trouble befallen him? What if he too had been struck senseless by some unseen hand? By the way, who had dealt that cruel blow? Was it a human being? Of course it was, for now he remembered how he had found himself bound and blindfolded.

The young man was rapidly working himself into a feverish condition with these thoughts, when Dr. O'Reilly, waking and discovering him to be tossing sleeplessly on his couch, insisted with harsh words and a tender manner upon his taking another sleeping draught of powerful herb tea, the secret of which he had learned from his Indian friends.

The next day Halstead was greatly interested in the Indians who came to visit and gaze curiously at him. The one who attracted him the most was Polo, their chief, a dignified old Indian who talked to him in Spanish, though he might as well have used his native language for all that his hearer understood of what he said.

He gained strength so rapidly that day, thanks to the Irishman's devoted care and nourishing food, that on the following morning he felt well able to ride, and was most impatient to start back toward the valley. He was amazed, when the horses were led up in front of the hut by an Indian vaquero, to discover in the one intended for his use his own mare Fanita. She recognized him, and whinnied joyfully as he stroked and patted her. Although he was, of course, glad to have his own horse, her unexpected appearance troubled him greatly, for it seemed to indicate that something had gone seriously wrong in the valley.

"If you could only tell me all about it, old girl," he said; and as the mare, rubbing her nose in his hand, gazed at him with her great, expressive eyes, it seemed as though she must be about to speak and give him the much-desired information.

As the doctor proposed to stay with the partners so long as they should remain in the valley, where he was desirous of making some scientific researches, he had caused all his effects to be packed upon a spare pony, and was therefore ready for a journey of any length.

During their ride Halstead wondered at the traces visible on all sides of the terrible, devastating power of the recent storm, and failed to understand how he had escaped with his life from its awful fury.

At length they reached the vicinity of the valley and turned toward the place at which they expected to enter the tunnel. If Linn had been amazed at the traces of destruction already encountered, he was doubly so now,

for the greatest violence of the storm seemed to have centred here. It was with the utmost difficulty that they made their way over fallen trees, twisted and torn in every conceivable manner, and among great boulders that had been hurled down the mountain side to the trough-like depression. They found the place where it had been, but the depression no longer existed. It was filled to overflowing with huge rocks and beds of gravel.

With a feeling of horror Linn Halstead realized that the entrance to the Golden Valley was closed and sealed as securely as though it had never been opened.

Hurrying to the edge of the cliffs, they gazed anxiously down into the enclosure, that lay as smiling and beautiful as ever far beneath them. For a long time they could discover no trace of him whom they sought.

At last, after they had followed along the entire length of the northern boundary, they caught a momentary glimpse of a human figure in the bottom of the valley apparently standing still and yet borne swiftly along. As they watched it it disappeared in the dark, yawning mouth of the narrow cañon through which the stream from the golden lake found egress. Then they realized that Thurston had taken the awful risk of his only chance and was making his one desperate effort to escape from his rock-walled prison.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DESPERATE ESCAPE.

The Prisoner in the Valley.—His Fruitless Efforts.—Quantities of Worthless Gold.—One Chance Left.—Building a Raft.—Its Golden Anchors.—Mournful Anticipations.—A Tantalizing Glimpse of Friends.—The Voyage is Begun.—Terrors of the Cañon.—A Fearful Plunge.

WHEN Thirsty Thurston realized the terrible nature of his position as a solitary prisoner in the cliff-enclosed valley, his first impulse was to return to the little camp and fling himself down in utter despair. For a while it seemed to him that he might as well die then and there as to attempt the further prolonging of existence in that detested place. He could imagine no possible chance of escape, unless his partner should be alive and at liberty beyond those frowning walls of rock. In that case he knew that not only one but many efforts would be made to effect his release. There was but little possibility of this, still it was something to think about. It was the faint hope that exists in all human breasts so long as life lasts, and the despairing miner seized upon it as the drowning man clutches the life-buoy that unexpectedly floats within his reach.

"And when my pard does come," cried Thurston, "he shan't find me snivelling round here like a whipped two-year-old. No siree grizzly! If I ain't already out of this here gulch, he'll find me putting in some solid

licks for freedom. Who ever heerd of a live Yankee, who is likewise a Californian, being euchred by a blamed rock wall? They was never made for jugs, nor yet jugs for them. Give the Yank the use of his hands and let him alone, and I'll back him with all my pile again the wall."

While uttering these words aloud the miner began preparing some food, for, as he wisely remarked to himself, "No first-class job was ever yet put through without a solid backing of grub. Likewise, gentle*men*, the job I've just contracted for has got to be done first-class or it won't wash nothing but tailings."

After his meal the miner shouldered his pick and started toward the place where he and his partner had worked so cheerfully and hopefully together, determined to discover the nature of the material that now filled the tunnel, and, if possible, to dig his way out through it. As he reached Linn Hill, he saw, what he had not noticed on his previous visit of that morning, that the new deposit of gravel covering it fairly gleamed with gold. But what did he care for gold now? He trod the nuggets under foot as though they were pebbles, and valued them about as highly. As he dug with mighty blows into the mass that had crushed the shrubbery and now concealed the face of the tunnel, he scattered the lumps of precious metal right and left, only thinking of them as something to be removed as quickly as possible because they lay between him and liberty. He was truly embarrassed by riches, and, like many another millionaire, would gladly have exchanged them for that freedom of action from which they debarred him.

After two hours of tremendous and incessant labor, he had cleared a narrow path through the débris of sand, gravel, and gold, to the face of the rock curtain that hung above the former entrance to the tunnel. Here he could trace the outline of its shape, but that was all. Behind that curtain the aperture was filled with great rocks, apparently cemented together, so solidly were they packed. The blows of his pick glanced from them as though they were adamant. He had nothing to hope for in this direction, and he knew it. He might as well attack the everlasting cliffs that towered grimly above him, as this barrier that had been formed in an hour, but would last so long as the world lasts.

As the miner faced it, leaning on his pick and brushing away the great sweat-drops that filled his eyes like tears, the feeling of despair again clutched at him, and whispered that, like this one, so all his efforts to escape beyond those narrow limits could only result in failure.

"Not much, you don't!" he cried aloud, rousing himself and turning to leave the spot. "You may hold a boss hand, or you may have the nerve to play a big game of bluff, but old Thirsty'll draw the cards that'll beat you yet. It's a sizable pot, but he's bound to scoop it, and don't you make any mistake about that."

Leaving Linn Hill and its heaped-up treasures, Thurston now began a minute inspection of the rocky walls that hemmed him in from one end of the valley to the other. Foot by foot, he scrutinized them. Every cleft was looked into, the height of every ledge was estimated. Could he, by any amount of persevering labor,

hew out footholds in the rock here, or place a series of ladders there? He spent the rest of that and half the following day in this investigation, and then he knew that without wings he could no more scale those sheer, clean-cut cliffs than he could drive a tunnel through them with his pickaxe.

His labors had been fruitless, and thus far he had discovered nothing, save the unassailable strength of the walls that confined him, and that they held a wealth of gold hitherto undreamed of. He found it everywhere, yellow and glistening from its recent scouring. Every crevice was filled with it. It was showered down upon him when he tested the strength of hanging vines, and it rolled from beneath his feet whenever he climbed into some miniature cañon that offered a momentary hope of escape. Millions of dollars' worth were to be had for the gathering. The Golden Valley was indeed golden, and the quantities of the yellow metal that Thurston saw, and spurned as though it were the veriest dross, would, a few days before, have excited his wildest enthusiasm. Now it but excited his scorn and wrath, as not only being utterly worthless to him in his present position, but as being at the bottom of all his trouble.

"If it hadn't been for you, you shining lump of general cussedness!" he exclaimed, as he wrathfully kicked away a great nugget over which he had just stumbled, "I wouldn't be here now, corralled like a dickey bird in a cage, and my pard wouldn't be, Lord knows where."

Having thus discovered that he could by no possibility

leave the valley as he had entered it, nor scale the cliffs that surrounded it, and having made certain that no path led from it, Thurston bent his steps toward the one exit through which all beings not possessed of wings must pass beyond its confines, if ever they left it. This was the deep cañon at the lower end of the valley, through the narrow limits of which the outlet of the golden lake poured its waters. Here they rushed sullenly, with echoed murmurings, into a sunless gloom which the eye might penetrate but a short distance. What lay beyond that frowning portal was buried in a mystery never yet fathomed by human voyager; and as Thurston stood on the bank of the stream, at the base of the tall cliffs that had been rent asunder to give it egress, he was obliged to confess that his chances for escape in that direction were "almighty slim."

Such as they were, however, he made up his mind to take them, and now had only to consider what means he should employ to utilize them to the utmost advantage. Swimming was out of the question. He had no boat, nor the material from which to construct one, even had he known how to do so. Should he attempt the riving and hewing out of boards, from which to build a skiff, he doubted his ability to render it water-tight, or to so fasten it together that it would float. Clearly the only thing left was a raft. In his boyhood the miner had helped navigate great timber rafts down the Ohio, and it was the only style of craft in which he had any real confidence. He did, to be sure, consider the making of a dug-out; but, after all, a raft would be much more sea-

worthy, and would require much less time for its construction.

Having decided to commit himself and his fortunes to a raft, Thurston visited the rocky gateway of the stream in order to determine how large a one might pass through it, and decided that anything over four logs wide would be pretty certain to get jammed.

The building of the raft occupied two whole days, for dry cedar logs had to be found, cut into proper lengths, and laboriously dragged to the water's edge. Then, as he had no auger, and wished to fasten them together with wooden ties, he was obliged to burn two deep holes in each log, to receive the treenails that were to secure them. This he did by means of an iron picket-pin made red hot in a fire of oak chips. The logs were further bound together by strips of green elk-hide stretched and knotted with all the strength the big miner could bring to bear upon them.

He knocked to pieces the cradle that he and his partner had spent so much time and labor in making, and which he had jokingly valued at $10,000. With its boards he laid a platform above the logs of the raft. To complete it, he hewed out from the thick limb of a tree a rude steering oar or sweep. Through this he had also to burn a hole large enough to give free play to an oaken pin driven into one of the logs. For further purposes of navigation he supplemented this rudder with a long pole made from a spruce sapling.

Until he launched his raft and saw how buoyant it was, Thurston had intended to take only his rifle with

him on his perilous voyage. Now, however, finding that it would easily bear him, besides an additional weight equal to his own, without sinking too deeply, he bethought himself of the two sacks of gold buried beneath the fireplace of the camp.

"In case I should come out of this scrape right side up with care, it might be handy to have a little dust lying round loose," he said to himself, "and I can shove 'em overboard at any time if I find 'em in the way. Besides," he added reflectively, "what bully anchors they'd make, supposin' I should want to tie up before getting to the hole where the creek takes a dive underground, and didn't find anything to tie to! Gold anchors! There's something salt and tarry about the sound, and I reckon I'll pack 'em along, just for luck."

During the time that he had been at work upon his raft Thurston had not failed to keep a close watch upon the edge of the cliffs, with the vague hope that his young partner might be looking for him; but only the distant pine trees returned his longing glances. He was in no hurry to make a start on the morning that saw everything in readiness, for he wished to wait until the sun was sufficiently high to send all possible light into the gloomy cañon through which he must pass.

As he sat waiting for it to climb to its full height, he gazed mournfully about the little valley that was so beautiful as well as so terrible. He thought of his partner, and of how greatly they had rejoiced together over the discovery of this place, and upon gaining access to it. He looked upon his surroundings as a captive might who

loathed his prison, and yet dreaded to leave it for an uncertain fate.

At last the time came for his departure, and with a heavy heart he walked toward the raft. He had built it at the lower end of the lake, so that he had a mile of smooth sailing before entering the unknown cañon. The stream, still swollen from the effects of the recent storm, ran swiftly, and, to the lonely navigator, it seemed to move with the speed of a mill-race. He could not believe that a mile had been traversed when he saw the dreaded cañon opening darkly before him, and knew that, in another minute, he would have taken an irrevocable plunge beyond the pleasant sunlight, and from the security with which he now floated, into the gloom and uncertainty that lay beyond. He scanned the cliffs with a last lingering look, and was just in time to catch a glimpse of two horsemen on their very edge, far above him, when his raft was swept in behind the envious walls of rock, and they were lost to his view. He felt almost certain that one of them was his partner, and he dimly wondered at the cruelty of the fate that had brought a chance of rescue at the very moment when he had given up all hope of its coming and had passed beyond its reach.

This thought was but momentary, for his attention was instantly and fully occupied with his immediate surroundings, and with the dangers that sprang up, like armed men, to oppose his passage. The force of the current, in its quick descent, bore him onward at what seemed a frightful velocity, though in reality it was not

more than seven or eight miles an hour. Jagged rocks rose on all sides of him, and it required the constant exercise of his utmost skill and strength to avoid being dashed against them. Sharp turns presented new and sudden dangers without the slightest warning of their nature. At times the raft spun round and round, as though in the vortex of a maelstrom, and he had no strength to guide or propel it through the whirl of waters. Sooner or later it would be flung aside as something utterly worthless, and be allowed to drift on. The unceasing roar of waters, echoed and re-echoed between the granite walls high above him, seemed to beat upon the man's brain, and to numb it with the terrible monotony of sound. He no longer thought—he merely acted. He ceased to realize a previous existence, but felt that he had always been drifting thus, and anything else would have seemed strange and unnatural. His eyes were fixed upon the rocks that came and went, and that he mechanically avoided. He saw nothing else and knew of nothing else. He did not even notice that, after a certain length of time—it might have been hours or days for all that he knew—the cañon widened high above him, that trees began to creep down its sides, and that there were even places where a human being might possibly approach to within a hundred feet or so of him.

Occasionally the raft struck, and hung for more or less time on hidden rocks that reached up spitefully from the black depths of the stream, but always, after a while, it and the man together struggled free from the clutch of the stony fingers, and drifted on.

At last there came a roaring sound, so much louder than anything that had preceded it that it startled even the numbed brain into activity, and the man looked up. He saw a smooth reach of black waters, upon which sunlight was flashing, rushing onward, in one unbroken sweep, between the grim walls in front of him. As straight and swift as an arrow they sped to a certain point, and then vanished. The dull roar that filled all surrounding space with its voice and silenced every other sound came from beyond.

The man's brain woke into instant activity. He knew what the sound meant. He knew what was before him, and what he had to expect. He stood on his raft, erect, rigid, and watchful. The next minute the vanishing-point of the torrent was reached, the raft seemed to poise for an instant on the verge of the fall, and then it went down with the tumbling waters.

At the moment of its hesitation before taking the final plunge, the man leaped. He flung himself forward, with a force he had never before possessed, into space; and when the seething waters closed over his head he was twenty feet in front of the cataract.

A wild cry from below had greeted Thurston's appearance, and when, a minute later, his breathless body was tossed aloft on the yeasty billows, a strong swimmer seized it, and together they were drawn ashore.

CHAPTER XXII.

DRAWN FROM A WHIRLPOOL.

A Furious Ride.—The Black Fall and its Boiling Caldron.—Down the Side of the Cañon.—Waiting and Suspense.—Thurston Appears on the Verge of the Fall.—His Bold Leap.—Cæsar O'Reilly Saves Him, and Fanita Saves them Both.—The Last of the Golden Valley.—A Cheerful Camp.

As Linn Halstead and his companion reined up on the edge of the cliff, and, far below them, discovered the man for whom they had been searching only to see him vanish, the next moment, between the black jaws of the cañon, the former uttered an exclamation of dismay, and cried :

"What can he be thinking of? He can never get out of that place alive! Oh, Thirsty, my partner! why couldn't you wait a little while longer?"

"He's doubtless thinking of getting out of that blissed valley, and he's gone through the only door left open to him," said Cæsar O'Reilly. "His chance is slim enough till he raches the Black Fall, and there he has none worth mentioning. But come, man; to take one more look at your partner, ye've got to ride like Tam o' Shanter himself. If we can rache the Black Fall before him, we'll maybe have the sad consolation of seeing the last of him."

Cæsar O'Reilly knew this country, for he had spent weeks in studying its features and learning its secrets.

He knew that the stream from the Golden Valley, rushing and roaring in the dim depths of its narrow cañon, could only be reached by human beings at one point. This was five miles from where they stood, at the foot of a cataract that he had named the "Black Fall." Here the spinning waters had worn a deep basin for themselves, in which they boiled and seethed so furiously that the "caldron," as the doctor called it, was a fitting title for the angry pool. On that side of the caldron opposite to the Black Fall, and a hundred yards from it, the stream swept beneath a low archway of rock and disappeared, to be seen no more, until it emerged, in the bed of the creek beyond the great landslide, in the form of a boiling spring.

On the northern side of the caldron was a narrow strip of bottom-land, above which the side of the cañon was less precipitous than at any other point along its entire length. Here, by the exercise of great care, a man and even a sure-footed horse might descend with safety to the water's edge.

The Irish naturalist had discovered this place in one of his lonely wanderings a few weeks before the date of the great cloud-burst, and had been so fascinated with its wild grandeur that he had camped on the bit of bottom-land for two days. He had noted closely the movements of the mad waters that boiled and frothed in the caldron, until he had learned the direction and force of all their opposing currents. He knew that the steady effort of the cataract had hollowed out an almost bottomless pit at the foot of the precipice over which it fell. Into this

it leaped, and any object taking the awful plunge with it might be held in that pit for hours, or even days, before being cast up into the shoaler waters of the pool. The doctor had seen great logs dive downward with the falling waters and disappear; then for hours he had watched in vain for another glimpse of them. He had also seen other bits of wood shoot out from the verge of the fall and, striking the caldron just beyond where he supposed the edge of the pit to be, rise at once to the troubled surface.

Now, as he and Halstead galloped furiously through the forest, taking no pains to follow the windings of the cañon, but striking an almost bee-line for the Black Fall and its foaming caldron, these bits of information regarding the place where he feared a tragedy was about to be enacted flashed through his mind, and he wondered how he could make use of them.

On any other horse but the wise and sure-footed little mare that bore him so swiftly and yet so carefully, Halstead must have come to grief during that furious ride. There was no trail; but the doctor seemed to know by instinct where he was going, as he dashed forward in a straight course, from which he never deviated. Without a moment's pause he guided his horse through the maze of tree trunks, forced him to leap logs, boulders, and gullies, sent him crashing through thickets or rushing down and scrambling up the steep sides of ragged ravines, while, close behind him, followed Fanita, bearing her rider as safely and truly as though they were traversing a well-made road. They had left the pack-

pony securely fastened to a tree when they started on this wild ride, or they never could have reached the caldron in time.

At last they came to the point where the descent into the cañon was to be made, and in its gloomy depths they heard the dull roar of the Black Fall. Here, Halstead thought, they must surely draw rein and proceed with caution, or perhaps even dismount and lead their horses down the slope ; but Cæsar O'Reilly had no such thought. He dashed over the brow of the declivity, and down its steep incline, as though the animal he rode were a winged steed, and could no more fall than the great birds that arose, screaming with amaze and affright, from before this avalanche of men and horses.

Rushing downward in a cloud of dust, leaves, and sticks, and accompanied by a mass of gravel and rocks, it seemed to Halstead as though he were indeed riding on the back of an avalanche, accompanied by a whirlwind. When he finally found himself standing safe and sound on the narrow strip of bottom-land, beside his panting mare, he could no more have told how he got there than he could have explained the law of gravitation. He only knew that before him fell and roared the cruel sheet of water over which his beloved partner must inevitably plunge, if, indeed, he had not already done so, and his heart sank within him like lead as he gazed upon it.

As for Cæsar O'Reilly, he apparently had no time for gazing at waterfalls or anything else. At the moment he was hurriedly divesting himself of his big boots, his

great hat, his tattered buckskins, and, in fact, of everything in the way of apparel or personal adornment that he wore. Next he knotted the two lariats together, and, leaving one end of the rope thus made, fast to its ring on Fanita's saddle, he passed the noose, at the other end, over his body and secured it under his arms. Halstead gazed at these preparations in silence, wondering what mad thing his eccentric companion was about to do now. When the doctor had completed them, he approached close to the young man, and shouting in his ear, as the only way in which he could make himself heard above the noise of falling waters, said :

"Now, lad, slip into your saddle, and kape your eye on me. Don't let the divil himself distract your attention. Maybe ye'll see me lape into the water, and ye'll know I have an object in view. When your partner comes sailing down this way, he'll aither go down wid the fall, in which case ye'll be left to find another, for ye'll see him no more, or he'll lape. If he does that, and lapes wid the lape of disthress, he'll drap somewheres about there." Here the doctor tossed a stone into the tumbling waters to mark the spot. "Then, if he's light, and hasn't weighed himself down wid the goold, bad luck to it, he'll be tossed to the top wance before the nixies try to drag him under the rock yander. But, if all goes well, Saysar O'Reilly'll have him then, and, pull as they like, they'll not get him. At that moment do you clap spurs to your harse, and drag us out ; for if ye don't, the fishes'll ate us afore ever we tread dry land again."

Halstead nodded his comprehension of these instruc-

tions, and, mounting his horse, fixed his eyes on the doctor, who, standing on a large rock at the edge of the whirling waters, gazed steadfastly at the top of the fall.

Five minutes passed, and, as each dragged out its tedious seconds, it seemed an hour to the strained senses of the young man. He was no more able to keep his eyes fixed upon the form of Cæsar O'Reilly than to have kept them closed. There was a fascination about the smooth, glistening verge of the fall that compelled him to gaze at it.

He knew what was coming, he dreaded to see it, and yet he longed to have the awful moment over and done with. He grew desperate for action of some kind, his breath came with labored gasps, and he felt that he could not bear the suspense much longer.

Ten minutes passed, and still the nude figure on the rock stood motionless and alert in the blazing sunlight, never taking his eyes from the glistening spot upon which he had first fixed them. The man who was about to plunge into that fearful flood and risk the losing of his own life in the attempt to save that of a fellow-man was unconscious of the fervent heat that scorched and blistered his skin. He had no feeling save that of a fierce joy in the coming struggle, and of impatience for it to begin.

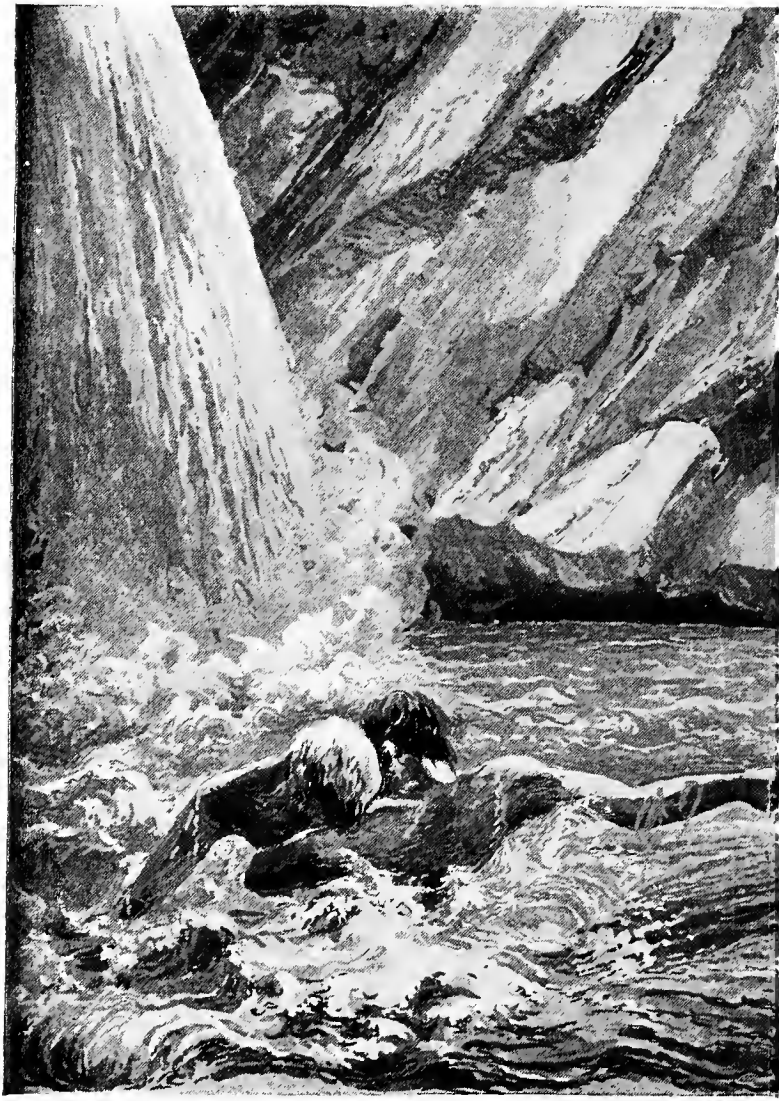
In another moment Halstead's overstrained nerves must have given way, and he would have dashed up the face of the acclivity, regardless of consequences, or done something equally mad, had not that for which they watched, and yet dreaded to see, suddenly appeared.

For an instant the human figure seemed to hesitate on the awful brink. Then it shot forward, and, with a great leap, was launched into space. At the same moment the young man's overwrought feelings found vent in a wild yell of mingled terror and despair.

As the man who had come down the cañon leaped from the brink of the Black Fall, so did the figure at the edge of the pool below spring far out over its boiling surface, and they sank from sight at almost the same instant of time. The brave Irishman came first to the surface, having sunk to a much less depth than the other, and, with mighty strokes, he buffeted the snarling waters that sprang at him, clutching and pulling him from all sides. The rope about his waist dragged heavily and cut deep into his flesh, but his dauntless will and splendid animal strength gave him the victory over all these. When Thurston's breathless body rose to the surface for its momentary respite before being again sucked under, never to reappear, Cæsar O'Reilly grasped it with a hold that death itself could not have broken.

Linn Halstead saw the movement, and in another instant Fanita's strength was matched against that of the whirlpool. It was a hard pull, but the plucky mare finally gained the day, and the two men were drawn safely to land. They were safe so far as the danger of being sucked into the underground stream was concerned, but both were in such a condition as to demand immediate attention and the utmost care that Halstead could bestow upon them.

Thurston's body was limp and senseless, but, in spite



Golden Days.—Pages 240–241.

DRAWN FROM TH

WHIRLPOOL.

of his own sufferings. Dr. O'Reilly was able to give the young man directions as to what he should do for its resuscitation. After a quarter of an hour's hard work, Halstead had the intense satisfaction of seeing a faint color appear in his partner's bronzed face, and of noting that he breathed easily and regularly.

In the mean time, the doctor had been nearly as exhausted as the man whom he had rescued, and found the greatest difficulty in resuming even a portion of his clothing. He was cruelly cut and bruised by the harsh rope, the strain upon which had been so great as to render it impossible for him to breathe while it lasted. His arms, too, had been nearly dislocated, and every portion of his body was so bruised or lame that he groaned with each movement.

As they were absolutely unprovided with food, shelter, blankets, or any of the necessaries of life, and must evidently spend the night in that place, Halstead started back with Fanita to find the pack-pony and bring it to where they were. He was obliged to lead the mare to the top of the cañon, and as he did so he wondered more than ever at the manner in which, less than an hour before, they had dashed down the same incline.

He had hardly gained the level of the plateau when he was so fortunate as to startle three deer from their mid-day nap, in a shady thicket, and to kill one of them. He dressed the carcase, and left it suspended from the limb of a tree to await his return.

The pony was readily found, after an hour's ride, but before unfastening him and starting back Linn went to

the edge of the cliffs to take a last look at the Golden Valley. It lay beneath him as peaceful, smiling, and beautiful as ever, but it no longer charmed him. He felt such a horror of the place that it is doubtful if he would have again ventured within its limits for all the gold that it contained, even had a way been opened for him to do so.

It is also doubtful if, after that moment, any white man ever saw this marvellous valley as it then appeared, for during the wet season of that year, which was one of almost unprecedented rainfall, the upper end of the cañon, through which Thurston had passed, was completely filled by one of the numerous landslides that occurred in all parts of the mountains. It formed such a barrier to the outlet of the golden lake as will stand for ages, and immediately the valley began to fill with water. In less than a year from the date of this narrative the once beautiful basin was transformed into an equally beautiful, deep, and exquisitely blue mountain lake. It is only one of a thousand that sparkle like gems amid the grim Sierras, but it possesses a fascination all its own for the tourist of to-day, and he lingers long beside it, gazing curiously into its clear waters, and speculating as to what treasures may lie hidden in their blue depths.

All this was, of course, undreamed of by Linn Halstead, and as he turned away from the valley, it was with a feeling of profound thankfulness for both his own and his partner's marvellous escape from the dangers that had recently menaced them in and about it. In remembering these, he had no thought of what they had lost;

in fact, as he knew nothing of the robbery, he imagined their hardly-won gold to be still buried in the place he had just looked upon. He had a vague idea that some day they might return and find a way of removing it, but at present his only desire was to leave these wild solitudes that held so much of hardship and suffering, and return to the haunts of men.

Filled with such thoughts, and anxious to rejoin his companions before nightfall, the young man, with Fanita and the pack-pony, retraced his steps, and reached the place where he had left the deer just as the sun, whose rising poor Thurston had watched so anxiously that morning, was hidden behind the western peaks. Loading the venison, which, under the circumstances, was his most precious possession, upon Fanita, Linn first led her carefully down the steep side of the cañon, and then returned for the pony.

He found the doctor anxiously and impatiently awaiting his coming, and Thurston recovering from his terrible shock slowly but surely. The stalwart miner promised to be quite himself again by morning, but at present he lay in a semi-doze, only occasionally opening his eyes to gaze wonderingly at the strange figure of Cæsar O'Reilly, whose presence evidently perplexed him. His face lighted with a glad smile at sight of his partner, and he was able to return the pressure of the young man's fervent hand-grasp. He did not attempt to speak, but with his eyes he followed Halstead's every movement, as though dreading to again lose sight of him.

The doctor was jubilant over the venison, and declared

that it would soon make a new man of the three of them, as he watched, with expectant sniffs, the broiling steaks that he at once undertook to prepare for their supper.

In the mean time, Linn constructed a rude lean-to of poles and branches, that, facing the fire, presented a bright and warm interior in pleasant contrast to the outside darkness, and the chill which in that high region follows so closely upon sunset.

Taken altogether, it was as cheerful a little camp as could have been found in any part of the mountains that night; and, as its occupants contrasted their present situation with that of a few hours before, their hearts were filled with gratitude for all the mercies that had been granted them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME FEATURES OF DUSTY GULCH.

Thirsty's Gold Anchors are Recovered.—The Doctor Refuses a Reward.—A Recently-founded Mining-Camp.—Fanita Hails an Old Acquaintance and is Gladly Recognized.—Kangaroot Again.—A "Terror" by the Name of "Wolf."—Thurston Finds it Necessary to Knock him Down.—The Partners Discover an Enemy in a Sad Plight.

BESIDES eating heartily of the venison Halstead had been fortunate enough to obtain, Dr. O'Reilly made an external application, both to his own body and Thurston's, of a liberal coating of melted deer tallow. There is no more excellent remedy in the world than this for aches, bruises, or lame joints, and by morning it, together with the night's rest, had almost restored the two men to their normal condition.

All of them were anxious to leave that place as quickly as possible on account of its unhappy associations, because of their scanty supply of provisions, and also because of the incessant thunder of the Black Fall, that almost precluded conversation. And the partners had so much to tell each other! As for Cæsar O'Reilly, to deprive him of the power of speech would be to take from him that part of life best worth living, and, in spite of the roar of the waterfall, the others could perceive, by the movements of his lips and his occasional gestures, that he was

entertaining himself, if not them, with a steady flow of conversation.

Just as they were ready to start, Halstead saw, by the doctor's fixed gaze upon the waters of the caldron, and the rapid movement of his lips, that something of unusual interest was exciting his curiosity. Stepping close to him, he shouted an inquiry as to what it was. For answer, the Irishman pointed to two dark objects, with white tops, that seemed to be swimming in a circle, at one point of which they approached quite near the edge of the pool, while the opposite one found them well out in the boiling waters.

Now that Halstead's attention was directed to them, they and their eccentric movements puzzled him quite as much as they had the doctor. Finally he shouted, "I believe they are logs, recently cut, with one end hidden beneath the water, but I can't imagine why they keep sailing round in that way."

Here, Thurston, who had approached to see what the others were gazing at, suddenly shouted, "Why, pard, them's two of my raft-logs, and I reckon they're anchored with fifty-pound gold anchors. I gave 'em each a right lengthy rope of elk-hide, thinking, perhaps, they'd hold the ship if I wanted to stop any time during the voyage. What a blamed lucky thing it was that I clean forgot all about 'em," he said in a lower tone to himself. "For if I'd made out to anchor anywheres the other side of that fall, I'd never had the grit to let go and jump it in cold blood. Then what a tizzy-wizzy we'd all been in! Me up there with no wings handy, and pard and 'Irish' down

here without their balloons. Yes, pard," he added aloud, "there's $20,000 worth of dust fast to the ends of them sticks out there, and the man that wants it bad enough to go for it can have it. For my part I've retired from the diving business, and I wouldn't go into that tea-kettle again, not for the biggest pile that ever was dug."

"Neither would I," thought Halstead, "but I believe I'll make a try for them all the same, for I'd rather have some gold that's already dug than to have to stop and spend any time hunting for more on our way back to the settlements."

In the Golden Valley the young man had occupied much of his limited leisure in practising throwing the riata, as he had seen it done by the vaqueros at Sutter's Fort, and though he had by no means become a skilful "roper," as it would be called nowadays, he had acquired a certain proficiency in the art.

So, selecting one of the lariats, and weighting its noose with a few bits of lead cut from the sheet with which Dr. O'Reilly supplied his bullet-mould, he took a position on the edge of the pool, waited until one of the circling logs floated as near as it would to him, swung his riata, and sent the spreading noose flying out over the water. It missed the mark, which was, after all, but a small one, and the log quickly drifted out of reach. But $10,000 was not to be given to the fishes for want of another effort to save it. He tried again and again, until he had scored a dozen failures, and his companions began to grow impatient.

"The stuff's not worth the throuble!" shouted Cæsar O'Reilly.

"Let her go, pard. We can dig plenty more," advised Thurston.

"Just one more try!" pleaded Halstead.

This time, he threw at a point slightly in advance of his mark, and, to his own surprise, equally with that of the others, the noose settled over the end of the log, the leaden weights caused it to slip down until it reached the elk-hide anchor-rope, and the prize was secured.

It took a long pull and a steady one, first to draw the cedar log to shore, and then its golden anchor. With a shout of triumph, Halstead lifted the soaked and dripping sack from the water. The hair, that had been left on the outside, was nearly worn off by the rubbing it had received against the rocky sides of the basin, and it was evident that a few hours more of such friction would have worn holes through the tough hide, and emptied the sack of its golden contents. As it was, not a grain of the precious dust was lost, and, though its value represented but a pitiful sum compared with what the young man supposed he was worth only the day before, he regarded it with a greater satisfaction than he had felt in all the treasures of the Golden Valley when they were his for the gathering. He was experiencing the truth of the saying, that a dollar when needed is worth more than a million for which there is no necessity.

There was not the slightest opposition made against his trying to capture the second log, and he was so fortunate as to drop the noose over it at the very first cast.

Then the second golden anchor was also successfully landed. In one of the sacks was the very first lump of gold that, after Kangaroot had shown it to him, Linn had picked up in the Golden Valley, and he valued it more than all the rest put together.

Thus the past two months of toil and hardship were not wholly wasted, for, as Thurston said, besides these bags of dust, they had scooped in enough experience to last them a lifetime. He insisted that, while they would share equally in this, the gold belonged wholly to Halstead, as he had formally resigned all claim to it, whereupon Linn turned upon him, and, using his own words, said, reproachfully :

"Why, Thirsty, we are partners in everything, aren't we ?"

"Right you are, pard ! and I'd be meaner'n a galoot not to take it !" exclaimed the honest fellow. "And I do want it mighty bad, too, for I want to hand it over to 'Irish' here, as a slight, what you might call, 'testimonium of respect' for his fishing me out of the duck-pond yesterday."

"Of course you do !" cried Halstead, eagerly, "and he shall have my share, too, for picking me up the morning after the storm."

But "Irish," as Thurston persisted in calling Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly, would have none of it. He declared gold to be the curse of the world, and said it was blessings, not curses, he was after.

So the gold was left with those who dug it, and they decided that, if ever they could discover a clue to the

robbers who had plundered their "Bank" in the Golden Valley, they would devote it to following, and capturing them if possible, and bringing them to justice.

As Cæsar O'Reilly could not leave the two men, whose lives he had saved, to traverse that wild country unarmed, and without a single article in the way of a camp outfit, he decided to travel with them, at least as far as the first settlement or mining-camp. The journey back to the creek, down its rugged cañon to the river, and so on, to the most advanced outposts of the settlements, was performed very slowly, as one or the other of the three men was always afoot. It was therefore nearly a week from the time they left the caldron before they began to meet prospectors, singly or in parties of two or three. These told them of the new and prosperous mining-camp of Dusty Gulch that lay directly in their road, much nearer than Bad Man's Bar, which was the first camp they had expected to reach.

The diggings at Dusty Gulch had been discovered, only a month before, by the adventurers sent out by Bodfish on a vain search for the Golden Valley. Completely bewildered by his bogus description of the country, they had finally stumbled, accidentally, upon this place, and had gone to work with astonishingly good results. Already the camp contained a population of five hundred souls, and was at the height of its prosperity. A town of houses, tents, and huts had sprung up, as though by magic. There were hotels, stores, saloons, a daily stage-line to Sacramento City, and an amount of bustle, confusion, and business that, in any other place or

time, could not have been found in a town several times the size of Dusty Gulch.

It well deserved its name, for now, at the very height of the dry season, the roads were almost ankle-deep in red dust. It was whirled aloft in blinding clouds, and settled thickly over everything. Everybody who was not down with the malarial fever that brooded over the camp, was making money, and at the same time spending it recklessly. Champagne, at thirty dollars a bottle, flowed like water; flour and salt pork brought a dollar a pound each; eggs were scarce at a dollar apiece; fresh meat or vegetables could not be had at any price, while quinine, the only drug to be procured for money, sold readily for an ounce of dust ($16) a grain. Such was Dusty Gulch, when, shortly before noon of a hot morning late in July, our three friends entered its one long straggling street, and gazed about them in astonishment. The contrast between their present surroundings and the cool calm of the mountains behind them was so great that the two places could not belong to the same world. No, that was clearly impossible!

All at once a horseman dashed past them, and as he did so, Fanita, who had been plodding patiently along through the stifling dust with drooping head, pricked up her ears and uttered a shrill neigh of recognition. The next instant the horseman was flung to the ground, and his steed, which had whirled at the sound of the mare's greeting, came trotting back to where she stood, with every manifestation of eager delight. It was Kangaroot, Thurston's stolen mustang, and both he and Halstead

at once recognized him. Kangaroot and Fanita had been raised together from colts, and had never been separated for a day until the night of the cloud-burst in the mountains, two weeks before. Now, if they had been human, they could not have shown their joy at again finding each other more plainly. They whinnied and nickered, and capered about, and rubbed noses, and laid their heads lovingly across each other's necks, and acted generally in a manner that was both absurd and touching.

In the midst of the performance, the horseman whom Kangaroot had so unceremoniously rolled in the dust came up, with a savage expression on his face, and a cocked revolver in his hand, swearing that the mustang had thrown him for the last time, and that the trick would cost him his life. He had raised his pistol to send a bullet through the animal's brain, when Thurston stepped forward, and, striking it up so that the shot whistled harmlessly over their heads, said, quietly :

" I wouldn't shoot the plug, stranger. My experience is that it's one of the very worst ways in the world to break a hoss of a trick. Why, stranger, you might happen to kill him !"

" Kill him !" cried the man, in a fury. " I mean to kill him ! Get out of my way ! Who are you, anyhow ? Stand back, I tell you, or I'll send a bullet through you first, and him afterward. I reckin you don't know me ! Well, I'm a terror, and my name's 'Wolf,' and if you want one of my keerds, you'll find three of 'em up thar in the graveyard, with their boots on ! Look out, I'm going to howl !"

The man made a movement to raise his pistol again, but, on the instant, it was flung to the other side of the street, and his wrist was clutched as though in the grip of a steel vice. With his free hand he whipped out a bowie-knife, and a blow from the big miner's left fist knocked him down as though he had been struck with a sledge-hammer. He lay for a minute motionless in the red dust, and then, slowly opening his eyes, said, faintly :

"Let me up, stranger. You hold over me and I weaken."

"No," replied Thurston, sternly, as he stood over the prostrate man with blazing eyes, "I won't let up till I've got through with you. You look better lying where you are. So your name's Wolf, is it? Well, I'm a wolf-hunter from the mountains, and wolves is pizen to me, but I never kills coyotes. I cuts off their cowardly tails and lets 'em go. Now, Mr. Coyote, that there hoss is mine, which he was stole from me about two weeks ago. I don't say as you are the thief, for I don't reckon you've got the sand for the business ; but, if you don't tell me, in a hurry, where you got that hoss, and all you know about him, I'll brand you with Thirsty Thurston's brand, which is a slit ear, and have you strung up for a hoss thief before this camp's ten minutes older."

The name of the big miner was evidently a well-known one to the man, for, as he heard it, his face visibly whitened beneath its coating of dust, and he said, humbly :

"I didn't know he was your hoss, Mr. Thurston, and you're welcome to take him, of course. If you'll let me

up I'll tell you how I come by him, and all I know about him."

Permission being given him to rise, the man did so, and continued: "'Bout a week ago three ducks came in from the mountains, whar they'd been prospecting, and struck it rich, I reckin. They hed this mustang and four or five more hosses, and a mule, all loaded with dust, and they hung round the camp till yesterday, when they sold this plug at auction, 'cause they said he was too high-sperited for them to manage, and they couldn't fool with him no longer. They was stopping in a shanty up there on the hill, and I reckin one of 'em's in it now, but the other two lit out, down the river, last evening. I bought the hoss, 'cause I wanted one, and I see he was going cheap; but he's such an ugly cuss that I've been sick of the bargain ever sence, and you're welcome to him, Mr. Thurston."

Linn Halstead and Cæsar O'Reilly had been astonished and intensely interested spectators of this whole scene, but, satisfied that Thurston was easily master of the situation, they had wisely remained quiet, and awaited its developments, without taking part in it. Now, as Thurston ordered the ex-wolf to show him the place in which the three men had stayed, an order that he immediately proceeded to obey, the whole party started up the hill-side, followed by a little knot of loafers, who had been attracted to the spot by the prospect of a fight.

The dusty stranger led the way to a hut of poles and branches on the outskirts of the camp, and, looking in

at the open doorway, said: "Here's the place, Mr. Thurston, and the man I told you of is in there now."

Thurston stepped inside, and his partner followed him, leaving Cæsar O'Reilly to keep an eye on the horses. A man, evidently in a high fever, lay tossing and moaning on a couch of grass, covered with a tattered blanket. As they bent over him, he opened his eyes and uttered a great cry of fear, at the same time feebly waving his hands as though to drive them away. It was Wake-up Tedder, and as the partners recognized him, they looked at each other without speaking, but the same picture rose before the minds of both. It was that of a death-bed on the Isthmus, and for a moment the man whom they had known as Moore seemed to stand beside them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CLUE WORTH FOLLOWING.

Just Retribution.—Cæsar O'Reilly's Ruling Passion.—Practical Revenge.—Dusty Gulch by Lamplight.—"Man on Fire!"—Fate of a "Terror."—Heard Through a Canvas Wall.—Taking Away an Old Pard's Character.

THE man who had cheated and plundered Linn Halstead and his partner ever since an evil fortune threw him in their way, who had deserted them and their dying comrade on the Isthmus, who had struck one of them a blow that he had intended should be deadly, and who had left the other to linger miserably in a prison from which he imagined there was no way of escape, who had, in fact, injured them in every possible manner, now lay at their mercy. Thirsty Thurston had sworn vengeance upon him, if ever he should meet him, and now the time had come. He knew that, in whatever form his revenge might shape itself, even to the taking of the miserable life that seemed so near its close, the act would be justified in the eyes of the rude but justice-loving community about him.

He gazed for a minute in silence at the wretched figure before him, with its feebly-waving hands, and then, turning to Halstead, he said:

"Well, pard, we've run this here coyote to his hole, and you've got a right to your say as to how we'll settle our score with him, but, pard, I'd take it kindly of you,

if you'd just turn over your share of the say to me, and let me tackle the whole business single-handed."

The young man gazed inquiringly into his partner's face for a moment, and, seemingly satisfied with what he saw there, answered :

"All right, Thirsty, do as you please with him, and I won't interfere ; but, if I can help you in any way, don't forget that I'm here."

"Good enough !" exclaimed Thurston. "Now, to begin with, this here Tedder has got to be brought round and set on his pins again before he can rightly tumble to the little racket I've fixed for him ; and I reckon our friend 'Irish' can help us do the trick better than any one in the diggings, if he will."

Outside the hut they found that the loafers, disappointed in their hope of witnessing a fight, or some other equally enjoyable incident in the way of a hanging or a shooting, had departed, and that Kangaroot's late rider had gone with them. The horses had wandered to some little distance, and were vainly trying to find a few green blades of grass in the thin growth of brown, dust-laden herbage of the hill-side. On his hands and knees, totally oblivious of his surroundings or his neglected charge, they saw Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly eagerly examining, through a pocket-microscope, an insignificant-looking bug that he had evidently just succeeded in capturing after an exciting chase.

Without looking up at Thurston's call, he answered : "In a minute, in a minute, gentlemen ; but, as ye value your pace af mind, don't interfare wid me until I've

recognized the lineaments af this exquisite crature. I'm tracing his family resimblance, and it is af the utmost importance that he should be properly catalogued. He has the appearance af an *Evagoras Rubidus*, in the secondary stage af its divilopment; but I've not yet rejuced me suspicions to a certainty."

Thurston stared at the man in blank astonishment for a moment, and then, shaking his head pityingly, walked off to gather in the straying horses.

Whatever the big miner's plan of revenge upon his enemy was, it at once began to assume the practical form of an addition to the hut of branches in which he lay, a large tent fly to cover the whole, and a supply of necessaries, and even some luxuries, purchased from traders in the camp.

As soon as Dr. O'Reilly had satisfactorily classified his bug, he became greatly interested in his fever-stricken patient, whose case he pronounced to be "so sarious as to afford a medical man a rale pleasure, mingled with the gravest apprehinsions." His interest was not in the slightest based upon Tedder's character as a man, for of this he had learned enough to fill him with contempt, but because his was the first serious case of fever upon which he had found an opportunity of experimenting with a powerful remedy obtained from his Indian friends in the mountains. Thus, in his constant ministrations, he was still working in behalf of his beloved science.

Having, after several hours of hard work, become regularly established members of the community they had only entered that morning, Thurston and Halstead

strolled through the camp after dark, to enjoy once more the pleasure of being surrounded by other men, and to hear other sounds besides those of the mountains. After their long weeks of silent nights and uneventful days, the shouts and laughter, the music and sounds of revelry, that more fastidious ears would have found harsh and discordant, seemed to them very cheerful and pleasant.

Thurston met several acquaintances, from whom he learned the history of the camp, and of the swindling operations of Mr. Bodfish in San Francisco. He thus discovered that, while Bodfish had certainly been of the party who had followed him and his partner into the mountains, he could not have been connected with the robbery in the Golden Valley.

While the partners were thus gleaning items of news concerning the world from which they had been so long isolated, a sudden cry of "Fire! Fire! Man on fire! Put him out!" attracted their attention to the principal saloon of the place. From it a crowd of men were rushing with yells and whoops, and dragging a struggling form enveloped in a blaze of fire.

It was quickly extinguished, and as the man regained his feet and staggered away, followed by the jeers and hoots of the crowd, our friends recognized him as their first acquaintance of the place, the individual who had that morning proclaimed himself to be a "wolf." Upon inquiry they learned that he had for some time been the bully of the camp, as detested as he was feared. Being quick with his revolver, he had killed several men who had dared to differ with his opinions. He was, indeed, a

"terror," and had maintained his position unchallenged, until he had, unfortunately for himself, run afoul of Thirsty Thurston.

The story of his crushing defeat, in this instance, had spread rapidly through the camp, and had been hailed with sincere rejoicing. He had sought to drown the sense of his humiliation by drinking heavily, and had finally rolled, in a drunken stupor, under one of the bar-room tables. Here he was discovered, after some hours, by a practical joker, who was also so intoxicated as to be reckless of consequences, and who, breaking a bottle of alcohol over the "wolf's" head, and touching a lighted match to it, had raised the cry of "Man on fire!"

Although the victim of this rough pleasantry was not seriously injured, the hair was burned from his head in patches, his eyebrows were singed, and the beard had disappeared from one side of his face. His appearance was everywhere greeted by such storms of ridicule, that he was forced to fly from the camp, and thus the community was well rid of a public nuisance.

As the partners walked back toward their shanty, talking over this incident, Thurston suddenly laid his hand on Linn's shoulder. With a warning "Sh" he stepped close to one side of a lighted tent, inside of which two men were talking in so loud a tone that their conversation was evidently not confidential. The name of Bowers had caught the miner's ear, and at the moment one of the men was saying,

"What! Royal Bowers? Yes; I met him, and a pard of his he calls Hart, Ace of Hearts, or some such name.

They was camped just this side the Bar, and said they was bound for 'Frisco. I asked them if they'd see Thompson for me in Sacramento City, and they said they didn't know as they'd go that way. They had a pack-train with 'em, and I reckon they'd made a strike somewheres. You kin bet your boots, though, if they had they didn't do it by no honest work of their own. That Bowers is a slippery cuss, and I knowed the other feller, too, only I didn't let on that I did, 'cause it warn't none of my business. He was the duck that stole the Paddy's horse down to the Fort, don't you recollect?"

Here the other man said something in too low a tone for the listeners to catch what it was; whereupon the first speaker exclaimed:

"You don't mean to tell me that crazy Irishman is in these diggings? And Thurston, too; old 'Thirsty' as we used to call him, the man that stood off the whole outfit single-handed last year, when the boys was going to bounce them greasers? Oh, he's a rustler, he is! There ain't no bully-ragging allowed when he's 'round. Quiet-spoken, too, and good-natured! Well, I should call it! But when he's riled! Well, I'd sooner tackle a she-grizzly. Him and me's good friends, though, and no honest man hain't no call to be nothing else with Thirsty Thurston. I'd give a nugget for a shake of his paw this minute, and I'll hunt—"

"Pass over your nugget and take your shake now, William," said the individual in question, pushing aside the tent curtains and stepping in. "A nice free and easy way you've got of taking away an old pard's character,

and making him out a fire-eating galoot, haven't you? I'm only surprised you didn't stick on horns and a tail and make me out a—"

"Nice little Baa lamb!" cried Mr. William Williams, familiarly known among his friends as "Bully Bill," springing to his feet and overturning the soap-box, on top of which a solitary candle was stuck by its own grease, in his eagerness to seize the hand of his old friend. "How have you been since you lit out from the gulch? and where have you been? and where did you drop from? and how's your luck? I thought you'd gone to the States?"

"So I did, and so I didn't, and I've been peart and smiling except when I wasn't. Luck's been good and bad. I dropped from the mountains, and I reckon you've got to tell me where I'm going," was Thurston's somewhat enigmatical answer to this string of questions.

"But to get right down to business, Bill," he continued, more seriously, "me and my pard here, which his name is Halstead, and you'll find him white and square, if I do say it, struck a lead back here in the mountains, and was scooping in a pile when three galoots, of which Bowers and his pal was two, played it low down on us and vamosed with the dinero. Seeing which, we'd be pleased to meet up with them again; and, hearing you mention the name of Bowers as we was passing, we made free to listen in hopes of striking a trail that we could follow. Do you reckon you could blaze it for us?"

"Didn't I tell you that I allowed the pile them fellers had was got some other way besides honest?" cried Mr.

Williams, turning to the friend to whom he had been talking. Then to Thurston he said :

"I don't know as I can, what you might call rightly blaze the trail for you, Thirsty, but I reckon I can give you a sort of a general north-star direction that maybe'll lead you out of the woods. My idea, from what I know of them ducks, is, that there's too many would be glad to snab onto them in Sacramento City, and likewise on the river, for 'em to try that way. They're bound for 'Frisco, sure, and my belief is that they'll try to make it overland. If I was laying out their trail, I should say they'd leave the river somewheres near Mormon Island, strike across for old Murphy's on the Mokosumne, take it easy along to Stockton, and from there go by way of Livermore's, Pueblo San José, Wishman's, and Sanchez ranches into 'Frisco, by the back-door, where they won't be so likely to be spotted. There they'll lie low for a steamer and strike out for the States by way of Mexico or the Isthmus. You might run 'em down by following this trail, which is only my idea of the thing, you know. Then, again, you might make a surer thing of it by taking the short cut to 'Frisco by river, and heading 'em off at Sanchez's ranch, or even at the Mission, for they're more'n likely to pass that way, and perhaps they'll hang out at one of them places till a steamer's ready to sail. You've got plenty of time to do it in, for they can't make 'Frisco under two weeks anyway."

Thurston listened to all this with the closest attention, and, when the speaker had finished, he inquired, abruptly, "What have you got on hand just now, Bill?"

"Nothing of any account," answered Mr. Williams. "I've been working a claim back at Bad Man's Bar, but it's petered out, and I was calculating to have a try at these here diggings."

"What do you say to taking a *pasear* 'long with me, round Moquelumne way, and having a look at the old boys? I'm heeled for the racket, and maybe I can make it pay you better than rocking the cradle. Will you go?"

"Will I go! Well, I should say I would," replied Mr. Williams promptly, with an expressive wink that was intended solely for Thurston's benefit. "You know I never did hanker for digging anyway, and only took to it for want of something better to do. Shall we start to-night?"

"No," answered Thurston. "But if you'll be ready early in the morning, I'll be along by sun-up, and we'll light out then."

Linn Halstead wondered what his partner could be thinking of in making such a proposition to this re-discovered friend; but he forbore to question him until they had left the tent. Then he asked, "What's up now, Thirsty?"

"Why, pard," replied the miner, "you see it's this way. I hate to be euchred by a bower and an ace, and I believe, if you'll lend me your best, we can beat 'em; which, what I mean is, that if me and Bully Bill, who is a daisy, follows up the trail of the ducks that has snabbed onto our dust, and you and 'Irish' cuts on to 'Frisco so as to head 'em off at the Mission, we'll catch 'em one way or another, sure as Injuns is Injuns. Now the trailing party has got to hump theirselves or the scent'll be

too cold to follow ; but you needn't be in any great rush. They tell me that there is steamers on the Sacramento now, so that you can get to 'Frisco in three days from here, while, as Bill says, those fellows can't make it in less than two weeks.

"I want you should hold on here as long as you can, and then, if he's able to travel, I want you should take Tedder along with you. My idea for getting square with him is to let on that we'll turn him over to the Alcalde if he don't do just as we say. Then, when he's well scared, you'll trot him down to 'Frisco, buy him a ticket to New York that isn't transferable, and ship him out of the country. It'll be a good thing for the country, and, I reckon, for him too, for he's dead sure to get strung up if he stays in it much longer. I'll allow it don't sound like much of a punishment for all he's done, but if I've sized up the man rightly, it'll hurt him about as bad to have to show his face back in the States, without an ounce of dust to prove that he's ever been to Californy, as it would to hang him out here."

"I believe you're right," exclaimed Halstead, "and I think your plans for punishing Tedder and catching the other fellows are both so good that I haven't a single amendment to offer to either of them."

When all this was explained to Cæsar O'Reilly he said :

"Gintlemen, to get a good grip on the man who stole me harse I'd lape the Black Fall ; and, as going to San Francisco can't be any worse than that, ye may rely upon me hearty co-operation."

CHAPTER XXV.

A SENATOR FROM MOQUELUMNE.

In the Dry Season.—At Fault.—Eureka Camp.—Dinner at the Miner's Home.—A Political Meeting.—California Neither a State nor a Territory.—A Stump Speaker.—He is Held at Arm's Length and Shown up.—His Unpleasant Ride and Disappearance.—Thirsty is Elected "Senator."

A LONG, hot day was nearing its close when two weary horsemen, who, beneath the thick coating of dust that rose in suffocating clouds from beneath their horses' feet, would hardly be recognized as Thirsty Thurston and "Bully Bill" Williams, drew near to one of the principal mining camps on the Moquelumne River. They had ridden fifty miles since daybreak, and their horses were nearly exhausted. All day the heat waves had danced and shimmered in the dust-laden atmosphere about them. The occasional little gusty draughts of air that whirled the powdered soil aloft in spiral clouds were like the breathings of a sirocco. The earth was baked and seamed with deep cracks. The wild oats of the hill-sides snapped from their brittle stems at a touch, and the brown grasses of the plains crumbled to powder under foot. It was a typical day of the dry season in California, and under its fervent heat, and that of many similar preceding days, the whole earth was scorched to a cinder. And yet, in a few weeks, with the first life-giving showers of the rainy

season, this parched and verdureless soil would give birth to such a luxuriance of green and flowering things as would charm the senses and banish all memories of its present condition.

But the dry season was not without its compensations. In it the streams ran low and disclosed their golden treasures. Roads that in the time of rain were impassable quagmires now afforded communication between navigable waterways and distant communities of gold-diggers. From beginning to end of the dry season they were filled with endless processions of mule trains, wagons, horsemen, and men on foot, ceaselessly coming and going to and from the diggings, in which all business operations were then at their flood.

Our wearied travellers had started out that morning full of hope that before nightfall they would overtake those whom they had pursued so far and so patiently. They had experienced little difficulty in tracing them from Dusty Gulch to the point reached the night before. Here they had received positive information, which they afterward learned to be false, that Bowers and Hart had branched off from the direct road to Stockton and turned toward the southern diggings. In this direction they had also gone, but having obtained no further clue were completely at fault, and by the merest accident found themselves in the vicinity of the camp, where nightfall overtook them. As it was one in which Thurston had been the discoverer of the diggings, and in which they had both worked some months before, they were certain of still finding many friends in it, and hoped they

might here gain some further tidings of the men they so desired to overtake.

They knew that the camp had prospered and grown, but they were nevertheless amazed to discover its extent by the wide area of lighted tents and frame structures outspread before them. Actually bewildered and lost in the place whose first frame house they had helped erect less than six months before, they were obliged to inquire their way to a hotel, and were directed to a rambling structure of rough boards and canvas that bore the suggestive title of "Miner's Home." Here they were received and greeted boisterously by the landlord, who at once recognized them, and who they also speedily knew as an old friend and fellow-pioneer of those diggings.

"Thirsty Thurston and Bully Bill Williams, by all that's good!" he cried. "Can you be took in? Why, boys, you should be took in and treated to the best the old ranch can trot out, if every mother's son in it had to be fired, and the whole outfit turned upside down to make room for you. Hi there! Manuel, Juan, Andraes, the whole caboodle of ye, tumble out here and take the gentlemen's horses to the corral. Rub 'em down well, and feed 'em, and treat 'em like they was ladies! D'ye hear?

"Come, boys," he added, turning to the dusty travellers, "come in and take a smile to wash the tailings out of your throats. Grub? Well, yes. If you'll give me an hour to rustle round in, I reckon I can get you up something to eat; but I hope you ain't in noways particular, 'cause you know what the run of hash in the mines is."

In less than an hour these two men, who looked like

tramps, and were treated like princes for old acquaintance' sake, were seated at their host's private table, which was loaded with viands in such profusion and of such excellent quality as would have done credit to a first-class metropolitan restaurant. There were oysters, roast turkey, fresh vegetables, a dessert, and coffee, besides wines and liquors; and this was in the heart of a Californian wilderness two hundred miles from the nearest market. Our friends had expected to make a meal of jerked beef, bread, and coffee, and would have considered themselves fortunate to get even that, but they were not in the least surprised at the feast spread before them. It was only another evidence of the wonderful resources of a land in which, as they had long ago learned, the thing deemed impossible was that most likely to happen.

They lingered long over the meal, talking of old times of six months before; but the months of '49 in that country were equal to decades elsewhere. At last they were interrupted by loud cheers, and the trying music of an impromptu band from outside.

"Hallo!" cried the host, rising from his chair. "Come on, boys, and see the fun. You're just in time to take part in the first political meeting ever held in Eureka Camp. The Honorable Judge Fisher, ex-Congressman, ex-mayor of some place or other back in the States, and Lord knows what else besides, is up as candidate for election to the Monterey Convention. To-morrow's election day, and he's going to make a speech to the boys to-night. I suppose we'll have to send him, 'cause nobody else has got any time to 'tend to politics

round here just now. He's got the gift of gab, they say, and perhaps he'll do as well as another ; but he hain't got the weight of the real stuff, and I mistrust he's only pyrites after all. There's plenty of the boys thinks as I do about him, and I reckon they'll have some fun with him to-night ; so let's go and scoop it in."

The convention referred to in these remarks was that called by General Riley, the governor of the country, to assemble at Monterey, on the first day of September. Its objects were to adopt a State constitution and to make formal application for the admission of California to the Federal Union as a State, without first having gone through the usual territorial probation. The necessity for such a representative meeting and organization was occasioned by the strange condition of the country, which was without a parallel in history. Its vast, sparsely settled territory had only been ceded by Mexico to the United States one month before the discovery of gold within its limits sent sweeping toward it an unprecedented flood of emigration from all parts of the world.

Congress had adjourned without providing it with even a territorial form of government, and yet its population was already in excess of that required for a State. The military rule established during the war was still in force, though there were no troops for its maintenance, as were the local Mexican laws. This complex state of affairs, together with the conflicting elements composing the rapidly increasing population, was well calculated to produce the direst confusion and to encourage lawlessness of every description. This already prevailed to an

alarming extent in certain localities, and that it was not more widespread was owing solely to the love of law and order inborn with all Americans. It had resulted in the election, by all communities of any importance, of alcaldes, and the adoption of certain strictly enforced laws. These measures were, however, proving insufficient, and it was evident to all who gave the subject a thought that something must be done and that promptly. Therefore it had been deemed best to call a convention of representative delegates, elected by the people of the several districts into which the country was divided, and to form a State that should apply for admission as the thirty-first of the American Union.

The first of August had been fixed as election day; but the notice was short, the miners were busy with their private affairs, the season for gold-digging was at its height, and in some districts not only could no suitable person be found who was willing to serve as a delegate, but no one had time to attend to the details of an election. Such places offered fine fields for men with political aspirations, who realized that to be elected delegates would be taking a long step toward securing other and more lucrative political offices in the future.

Among those quick to take advantage of this condition of affairs was the affable, smooth-spoken individual who had appeared in Eureka Camp a few days before the date of election and announced himself as a candidate. He claimed to have filled important political positions in the States, and to be possessed of such ample means that he could afford to devote his whole time to the interests of

the district. He spent his money in the bar-rooms of its camps and used every means in his power to make himself popular.

He was not, however, a member of the community, and there were many in it who, like the landlord of the Miner's Home, mistrusted him ; but, as that gentleman remarked, there seemed to be nobody else who could spare the time to attend the convention. Thus everything pointed toward the uncontested election of "Judge Fisher," as he styled himself, and he had already assumed the airs of a political leader.

He was evidently a politician who believed in the efficacy of music and spread-eagle stump oratory to win the heart of the voter, for he had engaged the services of all the musicians who could be spared from the bar-rooms, and had appeared in public with them every evening since his arrival in the district. The present evening was to witness the last and crowning effort of his campaign, and, having made a sort of triumphal march from one saloon to another of the camp, he was now addressing the following thus gathered from a rude platform erected in the street near the Miner's Home.

As our friends stepped out from the hotel the landlord pointed out a pompous-looking individual who, from his torch-lighted platform, was talking to a boisterous assemblage of several hundred miners, and said :

"That's him ! That's Jedge Fisher. Ain't he just a chick-a-dee-dee with the cheek of a government mule ! Ain't he a healthy specimen though ?"

The "healthy specimen" was just then saying, as he

stamped up and down his narrow platform, "California is God's own country, gentlemen. The most glorious land the round sun ever shone upon. The treasure-house of untold millions of wealth, and the natural home of millions of human beings. Shall you and I, gentlemen, who have fought, bled, and toiled to make it what it is—shall we, I say, submit to—"

What they were not to submit to his hearers would never know, for at that moment there was a slight commotion in the crowd, and a tall man, evidently, from his dress, a miner, sprang upon the platform. Seizing the strutting speaker by the coat-collar and holding him at arm's length with a grasp of iron, the man turned to the astonished spectators of this performance and said:

"Boys, some of you know me and more of you have, perhaps, heard my name, which it is Thurston."

Here there were shouts of "Thirsty Thurston! Yes, we know you, old man! Bully for Thurston! What is it, Thirsty? Toot yer horn, we're all listening!" while "Judge Fisher" squirmed in a vain effort to free himself from the powerful grasp of the man whom he had also just recognized.

When quiet was restored the big miner continued: "You do me proud, boys, and I looks toward you. I ain't no speaker, as you know, and never was mounted up on a packing-box before, nor yet faced a crowd to address 'em."

"Yes, you did, Thirsty, with a gun in each hand!"

"To address 'em," continued Thurston, without noticing this interruption, "but at the present moment I've

got what you might say was a call to do a little talking, and I ain't going back on it. You see, boys, I was in at the beginnings of this here camp, and having helped nurse it along till it could stand on its own pins, I naturally takes an interest in it. Such being the case I couldn't stand by quiet and see the wool pulled over your eyes by this trifling, low-down galoot."

Here Thurston gave the candidate a shake that made his head swim, as he continued: "Which, to begin with, his name ain't Fisher, and he ain't no jedge, but was known where he come from as Silas Bodfish, and a meaner, more worthless cuss warn't never seen in the diggings, nor yet was kicked out of 'em. He's just a leetle too mean to live, and I'll tell you why."

Here Thurston proceeded to give an account of how Bodfish had behaved on the Isthmus, of the part he had taken in stealing the map of the Golden Valley, and of what he had recently learned of his subsequent frauds in connection with that map. He ended with, "Now, boys, you know who and what this man is, and if you want to send him to this here convention as your delegate you can do so, of course, but I don't believe you will"

With this Thurston gave the little man a parting shake, and, stepping from the platform, left him standing there speechless with rage and terror.

The crowd had listened excitedly but quietly to all that Thurston had to say, but when he had finished it broke out with a tumult of yells and shouts of "Lynch the cuss! Tar and feather him! Down with Bodfish!" They did not proceed to the extremes thus suggested, but they did

mount the candidate on a donkey with his face turned toward the animal's tail. After parading him through the camp for a while in this manner, they took him to its outskirts and set him adrift in the darkness, bidding him never to show his face in that region again or he would have serious cause to regret it. He took the hint and with it his departure, nor has he ever been seen or heard from in that part of the country since.

As there was now no candidate for election as their delegate to the convention, the citizens of this camp naturally became most anxious to be represented; and, when somebody proposed Thirsty Thurston as the man of all others to fill the position, the suggestion was hailed with the wildest enthusiasm.

They never once thought of consulting the man upon whom they thus proposed to heap honors. They had determined to elect him, and that was enough. There was no need of bothering him by telling him of it beforehand. Before midnight horsemen were riding to all the other camps in that district to spread the name of the new candidate; and before noon of the next day, to his intense astonishment, the honest fellow heard himself addressed as "Senator" Thurston, and was informed of his election as delegate to the first constitutional convention ever held on the Pacific Slope.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A TRAIL REGAINED AND LOST.

Obtaining Fresh Information.—The "Senator" is Notified of his Election.—Poor Living of the Diggings Accounted for.—Hardships of Pioneer Life in the Gold Region.—In the Bed of the Calaveras.—Mexican Assassins.—A Dash Across the San Joaquin Valley.—Stockton.—Thirsty is Loyal to his Partner.—Two Thousand Dollars a Day.—The Robbers Disappear and Leave no Sign.

THAT Thurston did not even know of his nomination until after his election was because he had heard of a party of adventurers who had just come up from Stockton, guided by an old friend of his, and had set out at daybreak to find them, with the hope of learning something of Bowers and Hart. As the party had moved some ten miles up the river, he had a long, hot ride before overtaking them, but was rewarded by gaining a complete description of the robbers, who had been seen in Stockton two days before. This news was obtained from the leader of the party, who, as an old plainsman, could not only describe every man whom he had met between Stockton and the diggings, but could tell what sort of a horse he rode and its peculiar markings.

It was upon his return from this ride that Thurston was greeted, first by Mr. William Williams, and then by a score of congratulating friends, as "Senator," and informed of his election. He at first took it all as a joke,

but when finally assured of the reality of what they said, he was astonished beyond measure.

"Send *me* to this here convention!" stammered the honest fellow. "Why, boys, you must be clean off your base. I don't even know what a convention is, but I allowed it was a sort of a congress where lawyers and sich like went to practice speechifying. Now you know I can't make a speech. Besides, I've got business to attend to."

"It's all right, Thirsty," they answered, "you'll tumble to the racket quick enough when once you get to Monterey. You won't have to make no speeches onless you want to. All you've got to do is to vote yes or no. Why, 'Senator,' they're going to make a State out of old Californy down there. We've got to have our say in it somehow, and there ain't no man can say it for us better'n the one that struck the first lick in these here diggings, and that's you. Oh, yes, you're bound to go, Thirsty, and you needn't fret about the expense neither. All you want to do is to mosey along down to Monterey about the first of next month, and if things ain't fixed to suit you, why just send us word, that's all."

So there was no escape for Thirsty Thurston. He had got to go to the convention, and when he reflected that he still had a whole month in which to pursue those whose trail he was now following, he began to grow reconciled to the situation. He could not help feeling proud, too, of the honor conferred upon him by his old friends; and, by the time he fully realized that the convention was going to make a great sovereign and inde-

pendent State out of the country he loved so well, he became enthusiastic over the prospect, and impatient to take a hand in this new game.

When he had finally consented to accept the position of delegate, and to be on hand in Monterey within a month, and after his friends had promised to forward his credentials so that they would meet him there, "Senator" Thurston was allowed to take his departure. As he and Mr. William Williams, who had taken a most active part in the election and was jubilant over its results, rode away from the "Miner's Home" they were followed by cheers, yells, whoops, and howls of enthusiastic joy, the firing of pistols, and a loud popping of champagne corks, that was continued in their honor long after they had passed the last tent and were lost to sight in a cloud of red dust.

The newly-elected delegate and his companion rode hard until dusk, when they reached the Double Spring, where they stopped for supper and to feed their animals. Their own meal was furnished for three dollars apiece, but that for their animals cost eight dollars, as at that season of the year barley was one dollar per quart, and green grass the same price per handful. There was no hay to be had, because everybody had been too busy digging gold to cut and cure any.

With the rising of the moon they again took the road for a long ride during the cool hours of the night. Their way lay among the foot-hills, through a magnificent growth of stately pines and spreading live-oaks, the haunts of grizzly bears, as well as of deer, antelope, and

game of all kinds, that everybody was too busy to hunt. It seemed absurd to sit down to one hotel table after another, in a country thus abounding with game, and to find everywhere the same tough, jerked beef and the same salt—oh, so salt!—pork, unvaried, month in and month out, by any other meats. It made no difference to the landlords, for their customers paid just as much for this fare as they would had it been better. As for all others, the teamsters and mule-owners, who were carrying freight, at from thirty to fifty cents per pound, to the gulches and bars of the Moquelumne about fifty miles from Stockton, to Carson's Creek, which was fifty-five miles, sixty miles to the diggings on the Stanislaus, or seventy miles to the Tuolumne, and were making clear profits of $3000 monthly, had no time for hunting. The adventurers who were spending their last cent to reach the mines clearly had none. The wealthy gold-diggers, hurrying away from the scene of their toil and hardships, were too anxious to get their precious dust to a place of safety to think of anything else; while the man who was still accumulating would have considered himself as crazy as others would have thought him had he laid aside his pick, pan, or cradle for an hour, merely to hunt for a change of diet.

So they toiled on, contracting scurvy with their salt provisions, obtaining but little nourishment from their tough, jerked beef, imbibing all sorts of mineral and vegetable poisons with the river waters they drank, fevered by the torrid heat of the days and chilled by the cool winds of the nights, until the dead among them out-

numbered the living, and most of those who finally bore away any considerable portion of the golden spoils left behind a fair share of their health in exchange.

While in the golden days of '49 gold-digging was the most exciting and fascinating work in which one could engage, it was a pursuit attended by more exhausting toil, hardship, danger, temptation, sickness, and death than any other known to man. To crown all, it did not pay. A few made fortunes, as the few will in any business, and many earned good wages, as they could have done anywhere else, but the great majority of those early gold-seekers brought nothing away from the diggings except shattered constitutions, and made only a bare living outside of what they squandered in gambling and dissipation while in them.

By midnight Thurston and his companion rode out of the foot-hills and reached Raney's ranch, on the edge of the vast tulé plains, and close beside the Calaveras River, in the dry bed of which not a drop of water was to be seen, though a few weeks later a torrent thirty feet deep would be rushing between its brimming banks. The ranch house was only a frame of saplings, roofed with canvas, but it had cost $1000, and, as a stage station and hotel, was coining more money for its owner than the richest diggings on the stream above it.

Here, without waking any of the inmates of the ranch, our two travellers turned their horses into the corral, carried their saddle-blankets down into the dry bed of the stream, heaped up little mounds of its gravel for pillows, and a minute later were sound asleep.

While they were waiting for breakfast the next morning six horsemen rode up to the ranch, three abreast. As they drew near it was seen that two of them, evidently Mexicans or native Californians, had ropes about their necks, the ends of which were held by those riding on either side of them. It was evidently a sheriff's posse with two prisoners. From the sheriff, a manly, determined-looking fellow—as he must needs be to hold his office in those days—it was learned that the prisoners were being taken to a distant mining camp on the Yuba River to be hanged. It seemed that there still lingered in the country many natives who were not willing to accept the result of the war, or to regard Americans with anything but a hatred, that only their blood could satisfy. Among these were bands leagued together for the express purpose of killing the detested "Yankis," whenever an opportunity offered or could be made.

A common trick of these assassins was to worm themselves into the confidence of some credulous American, and excite him with tales of the enormous profits to be made by buying cattle at a few pesos a head in the southern part of the State, and driving them north to the vicinity of the diggings, where they would bring several hundred dollars apiece. Finally the Mexican would offer to lead his particular friend, *el Americano*, to such a place, secure one of these wonderful bargains for him, and share with him in the profits. The victim would gather together sufficient money for the trip and start for the southern cattle country, from which he did not expect to return for several months. Before this time

had elapsed, those who were interested in him, or knew of his depature, had in all likelihood become scattered, or had forgotten all about him, and perhaps the fact that he never returned passed unnoticed. So the game was continued long and successfully, and an unknown number of Americans, supposed to be several hundreds, were thus murdered and robbed. Finally, a week after two of these conspirators and their intended victim had departed from a settlement on the Yuba, an accomplice, arrested for another crime, divulged their secret.

The sheriff and three men immediately started on their trail, and followed it so hotly that when they finally came upon the body of the murdered man, in a deep arroyo of the upper San Joaquin, blood was still flowing from it. It presented a ghastly sight, for the head had been completely severed from it, and it was surrounded by a score of other bodies similarly mutilated and in all stages of decomposition.

The murderers had enticed victims to this vicinity and killed them, as they lay asleep, so often with impunity that they had no suspicion of pursuit, and were discovered within a mile of the scene of the tragedy, coolly encamped and dividing their plunder. Now they were being taken back to the hanging they so richly deserved, and our friends, looking upon their cruel, impassive faces, as they sat smoking cigarettes with the utmost nonchalance, wished they might witness the execution.

Raney's ranch was one of the few places of public entertainment in the country at that time that furnished an abundance of food for beast as well as for man. The

good effect of this was seen when, while the sun was just peeping over the eastern mountains, Thurston and Williams set out over the brown plains for Stockton, and their steeds sprang away with the long, sweeping lope peculiar to California horses, that is so easy for the rider and such a marvellous devourer of space. Mile after mile it was kept up without a break, except when they plunged, with seeming recklessness, down the steep side of some dry arroyo, dashed through the gravel of its bed, and scrambled like cats up the opposite bank. Then away again, past the oak groves that whispered softly to the morning breeze, marking their way by dense clouds of the ever-present red dust, and never drawing rein until, shortly before noon, the twenty-five mile ride was ended in the magic town of Stockton.

It was indeed a magic town to Thurston, who had known the place the winter before as the site of a solitary ranch surrounded by vast impassable tulé marshes. Where he had then shot elk and wild water fowl, now stood wholesale stores, hotels, and hundreds of houses or tents. Two thousand men were at work building a city of boards and cloth, and at the same time transacting the commercial business attendant upon supplying the needs of a score or more of populous mining camps within a sixty-mile radius of the place. Regular stage lines were already in operation to most of these, and numbers of boats arrived from or left for San Francisco daily. Many large vessels lay moored to the bank of the sluggish stream in front of the town, and its heated air rang with the sounds of hammers and saws, the rattle of

harness, the pistol-like reports of black snake whips, the jingle of spurs, and the busy hum of ceaseless activity in every direction. City lots that, four months before, could have been bought for $100 or so apiece, were now selling at anywhere from $3000 upward, and the cost of erecting upon these the most ordinary one-story buildings, consisting merely of frame, weather-boarding and roof, ranged from $10,000 to $20,000, according to size.

Thurston's eyes glistened as he and his companion entered one of the many gaudy gambling houses already established and doing a thriving business, and the old instinct to risk a few ounces of dust at one of the alluring tables was strong upon him. He did, in fact, sit down and half draw forth his buckskin dust-bag, but of a sudden he thrust it back into his pocket as though it had stung him.

"No, you don't, old man," he said to himself, as he got up and walked resolutely away. "You've got a pard now, and if he was here you know you wouldn't do it. You'd be a high-toned galoot to go and sling away his dust, just because you happened to be clear of him for a while, wouldn't you now? Besides, 'Senator,'" and in his thoughts the honest fellow dwelt fondly upon the title, "you've got the making of a State on your hands, or will have pretty quick. She's going to be the bulliest old State that ever was framed and put together; and you can bet she ain't going to be planned nor yet have her timbers raised by no such gambling sharp as you'd be, if I didn't clap the curb onto you. So put that in your pipe and smoke it, along with your killikinick."

They had entered the saloon as being one of the likeliest places in which to obtain some news of the men they were after. Nor were they disappointed. Both Bowers and Hart had been seen there no later than the preceding day, but it was thought they had left town.

If only the pursuers had not been thrown off the trail by that false information three days before they might have caught the robbers here. Now the hot, dusty chase must be resumed. It was too bad, but then Thirsty would not have been a "Senator," and the unscrupulous Bodfish instead of he would have been allowed to try his hand at State-making. There was a good deal of consolation in a disappointment of that kind.

That afternoon they left Stockton for Pueblo San José, without having any definite clue to follow, but still feeling certain that the robbers were making for San Francisco. At the ferry across the San Joaquin they picked up the trail again. The ferryman had taken particular notice of two horsemen, who looked as though they had ridden far and hard, and who had crossed with him the morning of the preceding day. "Pack animals? Yes, six of 'em, and loaded. Not big loads, but heavy. He reckoned it was dust." He had heard them speak of San José and San Francisco, and they were headed that way when he saw the last of them.

He charged two dollars apiece for setting the travellers across the stream, and in answer to their inquiries if business was good, said, "Fair to middlin'. Me and my two pards is taking in $500 on poor days, and $1000 when

there's any sort of a rush. I reckon it's 'bout as good as mining, anyway."

As these three men managed a tavern and a grazing camp, in connection with their ferry, and owned a good-sized schooner, that they had built themselves for the trade between San Francisco and Stockton, their daily receipts from all sources could not have been less than $1500 or $2000. And yet, four months before, when they landed in San Francisco, they had no capital but health, energy, and a Yankee training.

A hot, weary ride of thirty miles over the scorching plains of the great San Joaquin Valley, and among the foot-hills of the Coast Range bounding it on the west, brought our friends at last, late at night, to the top of the hill on which stood Livermore's ranch.

Those whom they pursued had only left there that morning. They were gaining on them famously. Perhaps they would catch them at Pueblo San José.

Both men and horses were jaded and weary when they started again at daybreak. Twenty miles lay before them to be covered as speedily as possible. Their road wound through broad valleys shaded by grand old oaks and enclosed by lofty mountains. It was one of the most beautiful regions in the world ; but the two men paid little attention to its glorious scenery. Their thoughts were wholly concentrated upon what they hoped to find at the other end of those twenty miles.

What they did find when they reached Pueblo San José was—nothing. They could not gain the slightest in-

formation of any persons answering the description of those whom they were pursuing. It was certain that they had not been there. The trail was lost, unaccountably but utterly, and they could not discover the faintest clue by which it might be regained.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FROM DUSTY GULCH TO SACRAMENTO.

Watching the Flume-Builders.—Linn Decides to Try his Luck Once More.—Boston Dick's Claim.—Diverse Opinions Upon the Subject of Gold-Digging.—A California Stage.—Cheering on the "Blankety Blanks."—Ruins.—The Marvellous City of Sacramento.—A Horse Auction.—The Steamer *Senator*.

WHEN Linn Halstead and Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly were left at Dusty Gulch to await the recovery of Wake-up Tedder, in order to carry out Thurston's scheme of punishment, the former found that time was likely to hang heavily on his hands. His companion was fully occupied with the care of his patient, for whom the Indian fever remedy seemed to be doing wonders, and with the capture of the numerous rare insects with which the locality abounded. Halstead had thought that, after his experience in the Golden Valley, he should never care to dig for gold again, and this impression was confirmed as, day after day, he watched the slow, painful labors of a company of men who were trying to divert a few yards of the shrunken river into a new channel. From daylight until dark they toiled under the broiling sun, in mud and water, carrying heavy stones, digging out the new channel, and damming up the old one. They had been at it for a month, and at last the job was completed. Linn wondered how they were ever to be repaid for all this

labor, and hurried down the next morning to see them gather their first gold. He found them all hard at work bailing out a quantity of water that had leaked in through their dam during the night. It was nearly noon before they were ready to wash the first panful of sand, gathered from the crevices of the rocky bed they had bared, and yet, before night, they had taken out gold to the amount of $1500, which, as there were ten of them, gave them $150 apiece for that day's work.

Before their claim was exhausted a month later, these men had taken $50,000 worth of gold from it, or $5000 each for two months' labor. This sounds like a good deal of money to have been made in so short a time, but when it is considered that their expenses amounted to nearly $1000 per month each, the total sum begins to dwindle. Then, with so much dust in their possession, and knowing that there was plenty more to be had for the digging, the temptation to spend it for the most extravagant luxuries was so great, that only in exceptional cases was it resisted. So the $50,000 melted away as quickly as, and much more easily than, it had been accumulated, and when it was all gone the flume-builders set to work to prospect for another likely spot in which to begin anew their exhausting toil.

All this was, however, not considered by Halstead, who, as he saw these men in possession of golden scales by the panful, became seized with a renewed longing to try his luck at the business. He had noticed a number of picks and shovels, apparently thrown away on the hillside, where such men as were working appeared to be

obtaining good results. From these abandoned implements he thought he might as well provide himself with an outfit, and go to work for the few days that he was to remain there. So, having settled upon what looked like as good a place as any, he took up a nice new pick that was lying near and began to dig.

At almost the first stroke he was interrupted by a voice inquiring, in a pleasant and gentlemanly tone, if he had bought Boston Dick's claim.

Turning, Halstead saw that the speaker was a young man whom he had set down, in his mind, a few minutes before, as one of the roughest-looking customers in the gulch.

Upon his answering that he had not bought out any claim, and only thought he would try digging there for a few days, as no one else seemed to occupy the spot, the other burst into a roar of laughter, and said :

"Well, stranger, I would advise you, as a friend, to drop that pick in a hurry ; for if Boston Dick should happen to come back and find any one else working his claim I'm afraid he'd shoot." He then explained to Linn that every one of the tools he saw lying about as though thrown away had been left there purposely to mark some claim. He said that, according to miners' law, the title to a claim held good just so long as a shovel, pick, or crowbar was left lying on it, even though the owner should remain absent from it for months. He also said that any one molesting implements thus left to hold claims was liable to be shot by the owner, and that the act would be justified by the public sentiment of the community.

Halstead was greatly crestfallen at having displayed such ignorance of the customs of the diggings, though he was at the same time most grateful to his new friend for having enlightened him on this point. The other, who proved to be a thorough gentleman and a recent graduate of an eastern university, sympathized with his embarrassment, and said that he himself had not known any better a few weeks before. To place Halstead more at ease, and illustrate what he had just said, he related the story of a man who, for a joke, laid an old shovel across a small spring that furnished the only water to be found along several miles of dusty road. For two days the shovel remained in that position while the thirsty travellers, looking at the spring with longing eyes, dared not drink of its waters without first obtaining permission of the man who had thus "claimed" it.

The gentlemanly digger offered to lend Halstead what tools he might want to use for a few days, and showed him an unoccupied claim near his own. In this the young man worked hard and faithfully for three days without striking the first indication of gold. Then, as the time had come for their departure, he willingly threw up the job, completely cured of any inclination for further gold-digging. The very next day a new-comer to the camp jumped into the abandoned hole, dug out a dozen spadefuls of earth, and struck a pocket from which before night he had extracted nearly $2000 worth of gold in small nuggets. He, in turn, proclaimed gold-digging to be just about the easiest and best-paying business in which a man could engage.

Under the skilful care of Dr. O'Reilly a week's time had done so much for Wake-up Tedder, that, though he was still a very sick man, it was decided that he was able to travel, and might be taken to San Francisco. With illness his nature had become greatly changed, although it would not yet permit him to understand or fully appreciate the forbearance and kindness with which he was treated. Since realizing that these people, whom he had so persistently injured, had saved his life, he was so far grateful to them that there was no necessity for threats to persuade him to agree to any plan they might propose. He regarded himself as an unfortunate individual, who had been basely deceived and robbed of a fortune by those whom he had trusted. It never seemed to occur to him that he had set the example of treachery, deceit, and robbery, and that the fortune he had lost he had first stolen.

As Fanita and Kangaroot had been taken by Thurston and his companion, and the doctor had sold his horse rather than to pay five dollars a day for its board, they were to travel to Sacramento by stage. Their shanty, with its canvas roof, together with the few utensils, and articles of rude furniture that it contained, was readily sold for $500, and they only took with them their blankets and the doctor's personal effects.

The stage in which they were to perform the first part of their journey, and by which the fare to Sacramento was fifty dollars apiece, though the distance to be travelled was only about sixty miles, was a strong canvas-topped wagon with seats for eight passengers. It was

drawn by four mules that had only been broken to harness a few days before. The one gait of which they had any knowledge was a dead run; and the manner in which that wagon was whirled along those mountain roads, through the foot-hills, and out into the broad valley of the Sacramento, was frightful to contemplate. As it came to the edge of some deep arroyo or gully, there was no cautious descent nor even a putting on of brakes, but a mad, breathless plunge over the brink, down at an angle of fifty degrees, a sensation as though one were sinking into his boots, a scamper across the bottom, and a rush up the opposite bank, the ascent of which was half accomplished by the impetus already gained. The remainder was managed by the driver, who, upon such occasions, stood up, leaning far over the dashboard, and, with a furious volley of original oaths and an equally furious cracking of his terrible whip, called upon the mules to "Snake her out this! you blankety blanked, infernal little blanks you! Mizzle now, mizzle! Hump yourselves!"

Then the little "blankety blanks" would cringe beneath the biting lash, or, under the volley of profanity hurled mercilessly at them, straighten their backs and flatten themselves, and with a supreme effort would jerk the stage out of the gully and send it flying over the brink, as though it were a ball attached to the end of an elastic string. Half the time, as the vehicle slewed round the corners of projecting spurs, it would run for fifty feet or more on two wheels, while the other two spun uselessly in the air. At such times the driver, who had evi-

dently navigated other craft than this at some former period of his life, would yell, "Trim ship, gentlemen! Hard over; *hard* over! There now, steady as you go!" Then all the passengers would scramble up to the weather-side, and lean out, and bear down, until an equilibrium was restored and they could again dash along on a comparatively even keel.

The teams were changed every ten miles, and one of these relay stations was Bad Man's Bar, at which Linn Halstead gazed with astonishment. The diggings here had "petered out" and the camp had vanished. Its tents and houses had all been folded or torn down, to be set up in some more favored locality. Only the stage ranch and the great mounds of tin cans that are the inevitable accompaniments of American civilization were left to mark the site of the bustling village that had occupied the spot two months before.

Already, in the year 1849, there were scores of abandoned sites of human occupation and activity in California, and since that time their number has increased a hundred-fold. Yet foreigners complain that in America there are no ruins. As Thirsty Thurston would say, "Ruins! Well, now, if this here little old State of Californy can't beat the deck for ruins, same as she does for everything else that can be mentioned, them I'm a galoot! Why, stranger, in the amount and variety and generally ornery aspect of our ruins, we can easy lay over the world and not half try."

Sutter's Fort was another ruin, and though it was still a centre of active life, its more important buildings had

been converted into hospitals, where, upon the payment of $100 per week, fever-stricken wrecks of humanity from the diggings could receive nursing and medical attendance. The walls of the fort were everywhere broken down and dilapidated, and its buildings, for the needed repairs of which nobody could find time or pause in the eager race for wealth, were almost untenable. Already this fort, the most prominent landmark of civilization in that region of a year before, could see the city of Sacramento reaching out to grasp and efface it. The house in which Halstead and his partner had been entertained so hospitably, a little more than two months before, was now a hospital; its former inmates had disappeared, and with them had gone Moore's tool chest, which Halstead had hoped to recover here.

But if Sutter's Fort showed signs of decay and a past usefulness, a ride of one mile beyond it ushered our travellers into such a scene of growth, prosperity, and active, throbbing life as rivalled the wildest dreams of imaginative fancy. In April, 1849, the city of Sacramento could boast but four houses. Now, in August of the same year, it contained a population of very nearly ten thousand souls. These occupied buildings and tents spread over a square mile of territory, while the shipping at its levee raised a forest of masts almost as dense as the forest of trees with whose branches their spars were interlaced. Although the mercury had that day registered 120° in Sacramento streets, and life beyond the shade of these beautiful trees was almost unbearable, they were being destroyed with a suicidal recklessness by the emigrants

who built their cooking fires at their bases, and by the speculators who removed them for the improvement (?) of their lots.

These same lots were only of less value than those of similar size in San Francisco, and small ones of but twenty feet front were selling for $4000 apiece. The City Hotel, in front of which the stage stopped, and in which its passengers found accommodations for the night, had been erected by Captain Sutter as a saw-mill, and now rented for $30,000 a year. The city already boasted a newspaper and the only theatre in California. To be sure this was but a rude frame structure covered with canvas, but its identity was established by the legend "Eagle Theatre," painted on a board above the entrance.

To both Linn Halstead and Dr. O'Reilly this marvellous city gave the first realizing sense of the phenomenal growth of the Golden State. As they plodded through the dust of its streets the next day, and were jostled by its throngs of eager-eyed, perspiring inhabitants, the bewildered doctor could only exclaim, "Wonderful! wonderful! But what a place for fire, pestilence, and flood!"

Cæsar O'Reilly's observations were fully justified by the vast amount of sickness prevalent in the place at that time, when three fourths of its population were suffering from ague or diarrhœa, by the destructive conflagrations that swept over it again and again before it finally crystallized into a city of permanent buildings, and by the disastrous floods with which it was inundated that very winter.

At that time gambling was the principal evening amusement of the city, and until long after midnight the air resounded with discordant strains of music from the innumerable saloons that lined the streets. In these could be seen adventurers of all nationalities, fierce-looking miners recklessly squandering the wealth for which they had toiled so hard and risked so much, and throngs of weather-beaten emigrants just in from the plains.

For these last especially was Sacramento the great rallying point. It was the goal toward which all their hopes and energies had been directed from the very outset of their weary journeyings. Now, with their travel-stained women and children, their huge canvas-topped wagons, and lean, pathetic-looking cattle, they formed a large, constantly fluctuating, and important element of the city's population.

On Tedder's account it had been deemed best to rest in Sacramento for a day, which was spent by Halstead in rambling about the place and studying its novel sights and customs. Of all these none interested him more than the horse auction, that was at that time held daily at the foot of K Street. Its novelty lay in the fact that every man who had an animal to sell acted as his own auctioneer; and as he rode his plug, sorry-looking, partially disabled, worn-out, or for some other reason undesirable to him, up and down before the assembled spectators, he loudly proclaimed its virtues and solicited bids.

In Sacramento our friends heard of other and rival cities far up the rivers: Marysville, Yuba City, Washington, Boston, Shasta City, and Downieville, and of

new mining camps, some of which were destined to become permanent centres of population, by the score. The stage ride of a single day seemed to have transferred the travellers from the depths of a wilderness to the very heart of an advanced and widespread civilization. It is not to be wondered at that they were amazed by all they saw and heard; for the growth of California in the year 1849 surpassed any similar movement recorded in history, nor is it probable that its parallel will ever again be witnessed.

Not least surprising of the signs of progress by which they were surrounded was the sight of the great river steamer *Senator*, that now plied regularly between Sacramento and San Francisco. This spacious and well-appointed craft had formerly run between Boston and Eastport, Me., and had but just been brought to California by way of the Horn.

Although the trip to San Francisco would occupy but a day, the fare was thirty dollars, which did not include meals or state-room. But what was this sum to those who were in haste to reach their destination, as compared with the tedious, four or five-day journey of a few weeks before?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAN FRANCISCO REVISITED.

Down the Sacramento.—The Long Wharf of San Francisco.—A Metropolis.—Three Months' Mails Arrive at One Time.—The Post-Office is Besieged.—Ships Far from Water.—How the City was Built.—A Place in Line.—On Watch.—A Steamship Office Acquaintance.—He Falls Among Thieves, and Walks into a Trap.

As the fine steamer *Senator*, bearing our friends, swept down the Sacramento River it was hard for Halstead to realize that he was still in California. It would have been much easier to believe that he was taking a trip down the Hudson. Here was the familiar black porter, with clanging bell, requesting "All dem as hain't done so, please step up to de cap'n's office an' settle." There was the spacious dining saloon with glittering glassware, and long tables at which meals were served for two dollars each. The same throng of restless humanity moved aimlessly about the decks, though to be sure it lacked the feminine and infantile elements that generally enter so largely into the composition of similar assemblages. But the scenery was original, and, with its vast sweeps of prairie and tulé marshes, bounded in the far distance by mountain ranges, it possessed a character all its own. The broad valley, that had been so green and so gay with flowers when Halstead ascended the river in the *Rainbow*, was now brown and lifeless. The air was hazy with

smoke from the burning tulés that were on fire in every direction, and it would have been suffocating but for the brisk breeze created by the rush of the steamer.

How well Halstead remembered the several camping places at which they had cooked, eaten, and slept on their journey up the river; how eagerly he looked for them, and how absurdly close to each other they now seemed! The windings of the stream placed Monte Diablo, the great landmark of that region, now on this side of them and now on that; but at length, in the afternoon, it assumed a permanent position on their left hand. Then they swept grandly around its base, only making a momentary, breathless stop at Benicia. Again rushing forward through the salt waters of the beautiful land-locked bays, they finally emerged from the Straits of San Pablo, amid the unrivalled and indescribable glories of a Californian sunset, into the broad bay of San Francisco. It seemed like getting home again.

As they approached the city through the gathering dusk, Halstead was bewildered and amazed at the extent of the illumination that marked its limits. Well he might be, for the city that one year before had contained but five hundred people and had boasted of its five thousand when last he trod its streets, now held a population of five times that number, and was growing with such rapidity that its physical aspect was visibly changed from day to day. The cluster of deserted vessels that he had left swinging idly at their moorings in the cove had grown to be a mass of shipping, extending along two miles of water-

front, alive with the shouts of their active crews, and now *outward* as well as inward bound.

Threading her way among these, instead of coming to an anchor on the edge of the flats and sending her passengers ashore in small boats, as Linn had expected she would, the steamer ran up to the end of a wharf so far from shore that it seemed to extend to the middle of the bay. It was the famous "Long Wharf" of San Francisco, that had just been completed, at an enormous expense, by a company of capitalists who had already begun to reap the immense profits that rewarded their enterprise.

The city had changed and expanded so wonderfully that Halstead might as well have been a perfect stranger for all the good his previous acquaintance with it did him now. The Long Wharf was a perplexing place in itself. From its extreme end, at which the *Senator* was made fast, to the newly outlined water-front of the city, a distance of half a mile, it was lined on both sides with a dense mass of shipping, from which freight in barrels, boxes, bales, and every conceivable form of package, was being discharged, and, even at this late hour, loaded on drays for removal. After picking his way through these, and escaping the innumerable dangers that awaited him here, the bewildered foot passenger had to traverse another half mile of that portion of the wharf built over the mud flats, where there was no water for vessels, and which was closely packed on each side with slop shops, drinking saloons, and gambling dens of the worst description. Here he literally fell into the hands of the Jews, who al-

most forced him to purchase the outfit of cheap clothing that they assured him was absolutely essential to maintain the reputation of a "shentleman as a shentleman."

Finally, escaping from this hot-bed of filth, drunkenness, strife, profanity, and importunity, Linn Halstead, thoroughly disgusted, Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly, so irate as to be what might be termed "fighting mad," and Wake-up Tedder, possessed of the idea that he either had been or was about to be murdered, found themselves in Sacramento Street, and in a much more respectable portion of the city. Even in this well-remembered locality the changes had been so great that no landmarks could be recognized, and Linn was obliged to make inquiries before he could guide his party to Merrill's-on-the-Hill. Change had also been busy with this establishment, and, greatly enlarged, it had expanded into a full-blown hotel, rejoicing in the name of "Irving House."

Learning that a steamer had just arrived from Panama, bringing the delayed mails of three months, Halstead started for the post-office the next morning with the idea of inquiring for letters. He managed to get within two blocks of the little wooden building in which Mr. Moore officiated as postmaster; but that was as near as he came to receiving his expected mail that day or for several days thereafter. Throngs of anxious seekers after news from far-away homes were besieging the office. Its doors and windows were closed and barred that the clerks inside might not be interrupted while sorting the vast accumulation of letters that nearly overwhelmed them.

Every now and then the besiegers would make a rush

upon the building that threatened to carry it away bodily; but it withstood the shock, and the busy work inside was continued uninterruptedly night and day.

On the second day after the mail arrived it was so far distributed that a partial delivery could be made, and, after the impatient throngs had been formed into ranks, the doors were thrown open. In front of them the lines were so long that those near the outer ends were obliged to wait five or six hours before reaching the place of delivery. Many persons were so impatient of this delay, that they offered from five to twenty-five dollars for good positions, and many others, by coming early and selling the places they thus obtained, did quite a brisk business and made a good living. For a week after the arrival of this big mail, these long lines of patient waiters remained a conspicuous feature of the city. Some of them brought chairs and took their places at midnight, with the prospect of an eight hours' wait before them. Venders of cakes, pies, and coffee, passing up and down the lines, supplied them with food and drink at enormous profits to themselves, while dealers in newspapers provided them with reading matter.

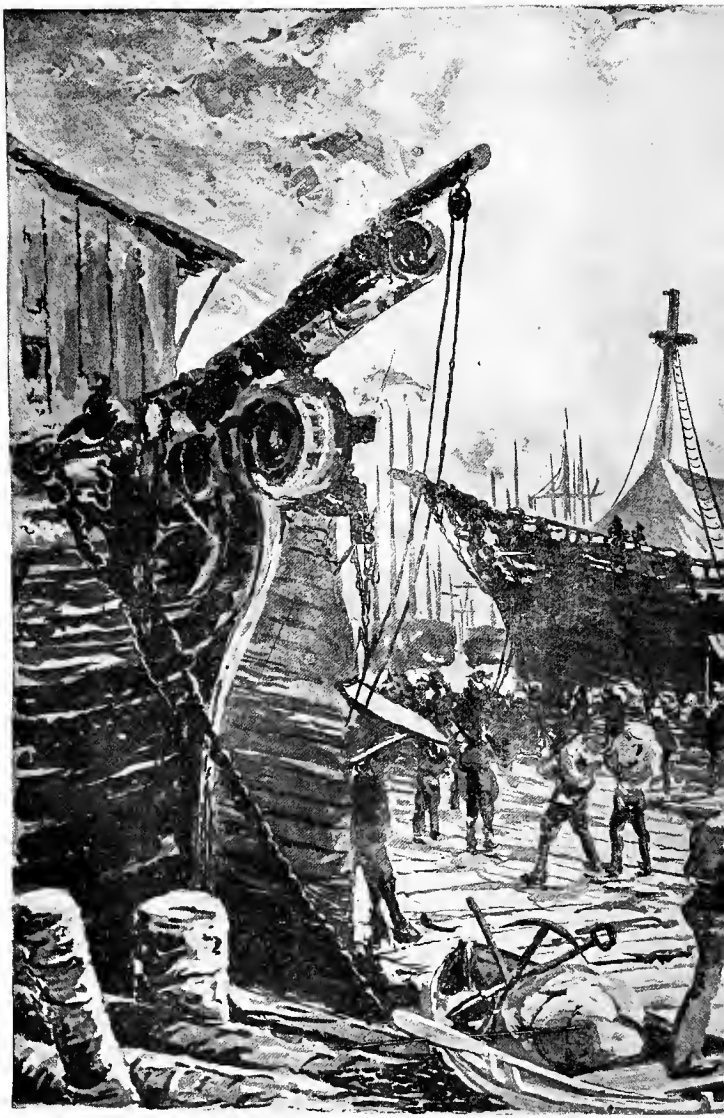
It was pathetic to witness the eagerness with which the recipients of letters from loved ones far away seized upon them, and, without regard to their surroundings, tore open the precious envelopes, to devour their contents the moment they were outside the office. As they were moved to tears or laughter by what they read, many of them, with an irresistible longing for human sympathy, exchanged confidences of the most private nature with,

or read aloud choice bits of their news to, the strangers who happened to stand nearest them.

While awaiting the distribution of this mail Halstead occupied his leisure in wandering about the city, which, with its ever-changing features, was full of interest to him. His curiosity was most greatly aroused by its water-front, which was each day extended several feet out into the bay. At first he was puzzled to conceive how a number of hulks of large vessels had apparently been moved several blocks inland from the water, where they were now occupied as hotels, saloons, etc., as though they had been regular houses.

As he watched the steam excavators, or "paddies," tearing down and levelling the tall hills about which the city was spreading, and the busy trains of tram-cars in which the loosened earth was carried to the water's edge and there dumped, the manner in which these ships had been so far removed from their natural element was made clear to him. They had not moved back into the city, but the city had moved out and grown up around them. Halstead now remembered to have noticed, among the store ships anchored on the flats at the time of his arrival in California, the *Niantic* and *Apollo*, and here were those very two, now surrounded by busy streets and transformed into the Niantic and Apollo hotels.

He saw many other things besides earth used in the filling in of these flats, and realized that much of the business part of the city rested upon a foundation composed of entire cargoes of tea, tobacco, silks, and other perishable goods, with which the market had been overstocked



Golden Days.—Pages 304-305.

AN FRANCISCO.

and for which there had been no storage room. Thus, even if they had not arrived in a damaged and unsalable condition, they became utterly valueless after a few weeks' exposure to the weather, and were finally dumped into the water to get rid of them.

On the new land thus formed had been or were rapidly being erected whole blocks of stores, warehouses, and other buildings, that in size, material, and finish offered a striking contrast to the rough board and canvas architecture of a few months before. Nor was the water-front the only part of the city that exhibited marvellous change and progress. The collection of tents, shanties, and occasional frame houses, that, clustered along the curve of Yerba Buena Cove, had formed the San Francisco to which Halstead had first been introduced, had moved far back over the hills, and in their place stood a city of regularly laid-out streets, containing block after block of substantial and even handsome buildings. The rude hotels of boards and muslin had given way before pretentious, many-storied structures boasting verandas and balconies, and offering all the comforts as well as many of the mere luxuries of similar establishments in Atlantic cities. One of them had been brought out bodily from its former site in Baltimore ; and they were all regarded by the inhabitants of this marvellous city as models of elegance and convenience. To this day there are sturdy "Forty-niners" who, while admitting that the Palace and Occidental are fine hotels, refuse to believe that the Ward, the Graham, and the St. Francis of those days were not fully equal to them for comfort and "high-toned" ele-

gance, though they might not have been quite so large.

The San Francisco of those days was indeed quite as well worth boasting of as that of to-day. Its monthly increase of population was counted by thousands, its buildings sprang into existence at the rate of twenty new ones every day, six hundred a month, or seven thousand a year. It was the most rapidly progressive city the world has ever seen, and yet the obstacles to its growth, before being overcome, seemed almost insurmountable. Hills had to be levelled and solid ground reclaimed from the sea to afford it a foundation. Building material of all descriptions was worth almost its weight in gold, and was scarce at any price. Skilled laborers demanded fortunes in wages. Every market in which the necessaries of life were to be obtained was thousands of miles removed, so that the cost of their transportation was in many cases much greater than that of their production. Even the drinking water of the place must needs be brought from a distance. The men of those days were obliged to be their own housekeepers, to wash, cook, and mend for themselves. They had a city to build under such conditions, and nothing to build it with but pluck, faith in the future, energy, and gold. Armed with these, its rearing was but a bagatelle, and it sprang into an existence as magical as that of a fairy tale.

Filled with some such thoughts as these, Linn Halstead wandered about the city, familiarizing himself with its novel features, and rejoicing in its tremendous activity, while he awaited the distribution of the mails, and a

chance to inquire if they had not brought something to him. Upon the payment of five dollars he finally obtained a one-hour place in the long line of waiters in front of the post-office, and at the expiration of that time received a short letter from a deacon in his father's parish, informing him of that father's death two months before. Although he had never loved his father as he had his mother, and there had been but little sympathy between them, the news that he was indeed an orphan and had no longer a home caused Halstead a sincere grief, and gave him such a feeling of loneliness as he had never before experienced.

In the mean time he and Dr. O'Reilly had established their watch of the road leading into the city past the old Mission, and one of them remained constantly on duty there, while the other took care never to be far away from Wake-up Tedder. As Halstead was certain that he should at once recognize Mr. Bowers, though he had never seen Asa Hart, his companion, so Cæsar O'Reilly was equally confident that he should not only recognize his own horse "Erin," but the man who had stolen him, and who, as he had been told, was this same Hart.

At length a steamer was advertised to sail for Panama and intermediate ports, and, according to his understanding with Thurston, Halstead went, late one afternoon, to secure a ticket by it that would take Wake-up Tedder out of the country. The steamship office was crowded, and he was obliged to wait so long that darkness had fallen before it came his turn to be attended to. While waiting, he fell into pleasant conversation with a stranger

evidently just in from the diggings, who informed him that, having met with good luck in the mines, he was now about to return to the States.

After they had talked for some time as they stood in line, the stranger preceded Halstead to the desk, and the latter noticed that, besides a ticket for himself, he purchased another for a friend, who, he said, would join the ship at Monterey. As he left he bade Halstead a pleasant good-evening, and hoped they should see something of each other during the voyage.

The young man had gone but a short distance from the ticket office, when his attention was attracted by the sound of angry voices, a confused struggle, and a cry for help coming from the darkness a few paces ahead of him. He impulsively sprang forward, and, as he did so, two men darted away, while a third staggered against the wall of an adjacent building. At that moment a door was thrown open, a ray of light fell on the face of this third man, and Linn recognized him as his acquaintance of a few minutes before. Blood was flowing from a wound in his left shoulder; and, in answer to Halstead's anxious questions, he said that, remembering some further inquiries he wished to make in the steamship office, he was retracing his steps toward it, when suddenly two men jumped on him from behind. While one pinioned his arms the other had stolen his dust-bag, and in his struggle with them he had received a knife-cut in the shoulder. Now, he, in turn, inquired if Halstead could direct him to a surgeon who would attend to the wound, which, from its rapid flow of blood, he feared was serious.

"Certainly I can," replied Linn. "If you will come to my hotel, my room-mate there is a surgeon, and will fix you up in no time."

The Irving House was not far away, and five minutes later Halstead threw open the door of his room, and invited the stranger who followed him to enter.

As the man accepted the invitation and stepped inside the lighted room, he uttered an exclamation of dismay and turned as though to fly. At the same moment Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly, with a cry of "Howly Moses, the harsethafe!" sprang forward and seized him. Another occupant of the room, whom Halstead recognized with amazement as his partner, Thirsty Thurston, also jumped up from the table at which he had been sitting and laid hold upon Asa Hart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THIRSTY EXPLAINS THE GAME.

The Robbers are Alarmed.—And Endeavor to Throw their Pursuers Off the Trail.—Which they Succeed in Doing.—A Surprise Party.—Cæsar O'Reilly Wants his "Harse."—Studying the Lay-Out.—Three of a Kind is Good.—Mr. Hart Accepts the Terms Offered Him.—"Erin" is Restored.—The Two Senators.

ALTHOUGH Messrs. Bowers and Hart had no reason to fear pursuit by those whom they had robbed, they fancied that the accomplice whom they had abandoned in Dusty Gulch might give such information as would induce the sheriff of that camp to institute a search for them. As they had other crimes to answer for besides this one that had been so successful financially, they decided to avoid the main routes of travel as much as possible, reach San Francisco as quickly as might be, and leave the country at the first opportunity.

They made every effort, by giving false information as to their intended movements and plans whenever questioned, to throw any possible pursuers off the trail. Although they travelled at the best speed their laden horses could make, they did not imagine they were followed until in Stockton, where they were obliged to give their animals a rest, they heard that Thirsty Thurston had recently been seen at Murphy's on the Mokosumne.

The mere fact that this man had escaped from the

Golden Valley was enough to arouse their gravest apprehensions, and they forthwith hastily resumed their flight. Some change of their original plan now seemed necessary ; for if Thurston were on their trail, as they feared, although he might occasionally lose it, he would certainly find it again sooner or later, and they knew he would finally track them to San Francisco. Once there, aided by the numerous friends whom he had in the city, he would almost as certainly discover them before they could leave it for Panama.

In this emergency they decided to separate. One was to hasten on to San Francisco without the incumbrance of pack animals, and there secure passage for both in the first steamer that left for the Isthmus. The other, keeping as far as possible from beaten tracks, was to make the best of his way, with the stolen treasure, to the quiet little seaport of Monterey. There, where he would not be likely to meet with any acquaintances, he was to await the arrival of the steamer bringing his companion.

They were compelled by their situation to trust each other, but it must be confessed that Mr. Hart watched the disappearance of Mr. Bowers and his train of treasure-laden pack animals with many misgivings. At the same time Mr. Bowers wondered if there was any way by which Mr. Hart could cause his arrest, at the same time securing his own liberty and a large reward for so doing. Still, as nothing more feasible than an adherence to their programme offered itself, they remained loyal to each other, taking to themselves great credit for so do-

ing. Thus each carried out so far as possible his share of the plan agreed upon.

Their separation took place at a lonely spot between Livermore's Ranch and Pueblo San José; and while Mr. Bowers pursued his lonely way southward, Mr. Hart proceeded with all speed to San Francisco, avoiding the towns and ranches at which travellers generally stopped, and entering the city about midnight of the day after leaving his companion. He remained hidden in a small hut, on the edge of the chaparral in Happy Valley, for two days. Then, learning that a steamer was advertised to sail for Panama, he ventured forth, late in the afternoon, to procure passage tickets, and met Linn Halstead in the steamship office. As he had never seen the young man, except at too great a distance for recognition of his features, he was as ignorant of his identity as Halstead was of his. Thus, when Hart found himself in trouble and Halstead offered him assistance, the former had no hesitation in accepting it, and so was led into the presence of the very men he was most anxious to avoid.

When Thirsty Thurston and Bully Bill Williams found, upon reaching Pueblo San José, that they had completely lost all trace of those whom they had pursued they were grievously disappointed, for they had made certain of overtaking and capturing them here. Putting up at the "Miner's Home" on account of the pleasant associations of its name, they spent a day in closely watching the new arrivals in town, with the hope that Bowers and Hart might yet come that way.

On the following day they scoured the surrounding

country, making inquiries at Mission San José, at Wishman's Ranch, and at the Santa Clara Mission, but all in vain. Nothing had been seen or heard of their men, who, so far as they were concerned, might have disappeared from the face of the earth.

As there was no longer the least chance of meeting with the robbers in that vicinity, Thurston said he would push on and rejoin his partner in San Francisco. Mr. Williams decided to turn back over the road they had come, claiming that he must attend to some business in Eureka Camp, but promising to visit Monterey during the sitting of the convention, to witness the triumphs of his friend the "Senator."

Thurston discovered Dr. Cæsar O'Reilly on guard at the old Mission, and, after an exchange of greetings and news, they entered the city together, there being evidently no reason for keeping watch at that point any longer. They were awaiting Halstead's return, and anticipating his surprise at the unexpected sight of his partner, when the door was suddenly thrown open and Asa Hart, the very man for whom they had been searching and watching so long in vain, walked into the room. He might possibly have escaped even then had not Halstead been so close behind that he was in the act of closing the door as the other turned upon him. The next instant the gentlemanly rascal was seized and held by two of the most powerful men in San Francisco at that time, and he at once realized the utter uselessness of resistance.

"I weaken, gentlemen!" he cried. "You carry too many guns for me. I'll heave to and submit my papers

for examination, if you'll only release your hold and allow me to sit down. I am somewhat weak from loss of blood, as this young gentleman, who I suppose is Mr. Halstead, will tell you. If I were not he would not have had the pleasure of leading me into this neatly prepared trap."

"Me harse, ye villain! me harse! Projuce me harse instantly or I'll murder ye!" cried Cæsar O'Reilly, at the same time giving the man, whom he still clutched by the arm, a powerful shake.

"Mr. Thurston," said Asa Hart quietly, without paying any attention to the irate doctor, "as we are not strangers, since I had the pleasure of meeting you near the Golden Valley some weeks ago, may I ask you, as a favor, to assure the gentleman that in this country we are not in the habit of carrying horses about in our vest pockets, or of producing them upon demand at any moment?"

"Well, if you don't beat a Dutchman for cold cheek!" exclaimed Thurston, in admiration of the other's audacity. "So you're the duck that led me off, like a bear with a ring in his nose, while your pards robbed our bank in the Val d'Oro, are you? And I never tumbled to that racket till now. Why, if Irish here hadn't spotted you for the thief that stole his plug, I wouldn't ever have known you for Bowers's pal."

"I suppose my personal appearance is somewhat changed since then," said Mr. Hart, smiling.

"Me harse!" shouted Cæsar O'Reilly, who was impatient of all this conversation. "Fetch back me harse, ye thafe, or I'll have your blood!"

"Oh, well, if you must have your horse immediately,

and will loosen your hold, I will go at once and fetch him here," replied the prisoner, sarcastically.

Cæsar O'Reilly looked at him for a moment doubtfully, and then divining that the man was quizzing him, exclaimed, "Ah, ye bloody villain ye! Is it letting ye go I'll be doing? Divil a bit of it! I'll grip ye from now till doomsday if ye don't instantly return me harse. And ye'll not stir one step from this room until I see him safe and sound forninst me two eyes."

"Don't you think, doctor, it would be as well to dress the man's wound before you send him out to look for your horse?" interrupted Halstead, smiling. "I expect he is pretty badly cut."

"Is it sind him?" cried the Irishman. "No, I'll not sind him, nor yet let him sind anybody else to give his thaving companions a chance to make way wid me harse. Here he stops, nor will he hold communication wid a living soul till he hands over me harse. Then he may go to the divil, or any other place yourself and Mister Thurston choose to take him, for all af me."

Notwithstanding his harsh words, the kind-hearted doctor no sooner realized that the man was really wounded than he proceeded to dress the cut in the most skilful manner and do everything in his power for the comfort of his unexpected patient. He even forced him to lie down on his own bed and ordered supper to be sent up to the room, remarking that an empty stomach made slow work of recuperating lost blood.

When they had finished eating supper in the most friendly and sociable manner, Thurston said:

"Now, Mister Ace of Hearts, let's get right down to biz. In the first place, I don't mind telling you what we know about you and your plans; and perhaps, when you've sized up the lay-out, you won't mind telling us if it's all O. K. By the first card of the hand we hold, you'll see that we have evidence to prove that you and your pal, which Bowers is the sign he hangs out, and another by name of Tedder, are the galoots that snabbed onto our pile, me and my pard's, in the gulch they calls Val d'Oro, and lit out with it.

"Secondly, as the parson says, you and Bowers played it low down on Tedder, and vamosed the ranch in Dusty Gulch, leaving him there to enjoy life in his own way, to say nothing of being laid by the heels.

"By the third card, you may notice that you and Bowers was trailed nigh onto Pueblo San José, and that, when next discovered by your anxious friends, you was chinning a ticket sharp for a lift for yourself down to the Isthmus, and likewise for another party, which was to be gathered in at Monterey. To yours truly that lead says 'Bowers is in Monterey with the dinero, waiting for Hart, who is in 'Frisco engaging box-seats for two on the wagon.' It was risky on your part, Mister Hart, turrible risky.

"On the fourth card, if you've kept tally rightly, you may observe the picture of a plug, which same my friend Irish would call a 'harse,' and likewise 'his harse,' with which you have been making free, contrary to the law of the diggings.

"Fifthly and lastly, Mister Ace of Hearts having

planned a surprise party for his anxious friends by walking in on 'em without notice, just as they was mourning his loss, they are now willing to guard him from all further perils of a roaming life. At the same time Bowers is waiting, in a camp easy to be got at, for a sociable interview with these same friends, who are just as willing to provide safe quarters and a festive little fandango for him as for his pal. Now, what do you say? Have I named the cards of this here lay-out according to Hoyle, or have I made a fist of it?"

"Your intimate knowledge of the game shows you to be an expert at it, Mr. Thurston," replied Hart, who had closely followed this summing up of the evidence against him. "It certainly looks as though you held a strong hand. At the same time I don't know but what the one I hold will warrant me in seeing your last raise, and calling you for the evidence to prove all that you have just alleged."

"Well," answered Thurston, "seeing as you have called, what do you say to three of a kind?"

"Three of a kind is good if they're big enough."

"Supposing they was three kings, by the names of Bully Bill Williams, Wake-up Tedder, and our friend Irish here?"

"If you hold those cards," answered Mr. Hart, "your three kings is good."

"I do hold them," said Thurston, "and can produce 'em if so be a show-up is called for. Such being the present state of the game, me and my friends here have decided to make you an offer. We ain't hankering after

any dealings with lawyers, seeing that they is tedious and likewise comes high, nor yet with an alcalde's jury ; for, being members of Congress, our time is too valuable to be wasted in any such poor diggings. So, then, if you will return his plug to Irish, hand over whatever dust you may have about your clothes, and stay quietly in this here corral along with us, making no kick again being tied whenever we goes out, we won't stand in the way of you using your ticket to Panama when the time comes. If, contrarywise, you elect to make a fight, with lawyers for backers, the alcalde will be proud to make your acquaintance, and will fix you up snug and comfortable in a little adobe shanty of his, which some calls it a 'jug.' They do tell me though that it's mighty easy broke into, likewise that the vigilantes is getting all out of practice, and is just naturally hankering for a chance to string up a hoss-thief."

"Under the circumstances," replied the prisoner, "I think I will accept your proposition, and will endeavor to enjoy your company to the utmost until such time as my ship is ready to sail. I ought also to add that at present I have no dust in my possession, my dust-bag having been stolen this evening, as Mr. Halstead is aware."

So our friends now found themselves with two prisoners on their hands, and as yet neither knew of the other's presence in the city. The next morning Mr. Hart, guarded by Thirsty Thurston and Cæsar O'Reilly, visited the place where he had left the horse belonging to the latter, and the Irishman was made supremely

happy by once more obtaining possession of his beloved Erin.

It was arranged that at night Hart should be securely bound, and required to occupy a room in company with Dr. O'Reilly, who slept with the key of the locked door under his pillow. Wake-up Tedder slept in a room in a remote part of the hotel together with Linn Halstead, who also locked the door and took the key to bed with him.

Cæsar O'Reilly suggested that, for greater security, he and Halstead should lock each other in, and retain the key of each other's room until morning, but, some objection being made to this scheme, it fell through.

On the afternoon of the day following Asa Hart's capture Thurston started on horseback for Monterey, fearing lest Bowers should change his mind and decide to leave the place without awaiting the arrival of his partner. Halstead was to accompany the two prisoners on the steamer to that port, and then leave her to rejoin Thurston.

As they talked over this plan, Halstead suddenly interrupted the conversation to ask Thurston what he had meant by saying that they were members of Congress, and for the first time heard the story of his partner's election. "They call it a convention," concluded Thurston, "but it's all the same as a congress. I like the sound of the name better, and I didn't suppose you'd care whether I called you a member of Congress or a delegate, seeing as they both meant the same thing."

"Of course not, so long as I am not either nor likely to be," laughed Halstead.

"Why, yes you are, pard!" exclaimed the other. "Hain't me and you settled it over and over again that we was to be pardners in everything, and if so be I'm a senator, ain't you a senator, too?"

The honest fellow was grieved at the burst of laughter with which his partner greeted this view of the situation, and was only partially reassured when Halstead said they would see about it when they met in Monterey.

CHAPTER XXX.

A NOVEL SCHEME OF PUNISHMENT.

Monterey from the Foot-Hills.—Mr. Bowers Makes himself at Home.– A Lightning-Bug from the Mountains.—He Threatens to Shine.—And is Ignominiously Extinguished.—The Stolen Treasure Recovered.—Two Unhappy Passengers.—Mr. Bowers is Bewildered.—They Three Meet Again.

THE mellow August afternoon, of the third day after Thirsty Thurston left San Francisco, was drawing toward its close, as, dusty and weary, he emerged from a gap between the low, pine-covered hills that rise behind Monterey, and saw the quiet town outspread on its gentle slope below him. He was evidently in no hurry, for dismounting and unsaddling his mustang, Kangaroot, he tethered him so that he might nibble at the scanty herbage. Then, drawing and filling a pipe, he stretched himself at the foot of a tree, where he lay meditatively smoking and gazing with great satisfaction upon the scene before him. It was certainly beautiful enough to have rejoiced the eye of a much more fastidious observer than the stalwart miner, though its beauty was of a soft and peaceful character, as contrasted with the savage grandeur of the Sierras, whose snow-capped peaks had so recently towered above him.

The silent town of substantial tile-roofed houses, many of them surrounded by gardens and groves, was scattered over nearly a mile of the slope at his feet. Beyond it the

waters of a broad bay, twenty miles in length, glowed in the crimson and gold of the low-hanging sun. On the right a fort, crowning a bluff, commanded the harbor. An American flag floated bravely above it, while another marked the site of the Government offices in the town; for Monterey was at that time the capital of California. Most prominent of its buildings was the Town Hall, or "Colton Hall," as it was generally called, in honor of Alcalde Don Walter Colton, during whose administration it had been erected. It occupied high ground just back of the town, and was a handsome, two-storied edifice, built of the warmly tinted yellow sandstone found in that neighborhood.

Two miles from Monterey el Punta de los Piños formed the southern limit of the bay; while twenty miles away, to the north and west, a long dark line marked the protecting embrace of Point Lobos at its other extremity. Through a thin veil of blue haze in the south, rose the tall mountains of the Coast Range, into which the softly rounded foot-hills back of the town were merged. A pleasant breeze blew in salt and cool from the sea, but it suggested nothing of the raw, chilling gusts that at that same hour were howling over the sand-hills of San Francisco. It was deliciously balmy, and lulled by its gentle whisperings to the pines Thurston fell asleep.

He was startled from his nap by the boom of the sunset gun from the fort, and opened his eyes in time to see the flag of which he was so proud flutter downward from its tall pole. Still he seemed in no hurry to move, and it was not until the last glow had faded from the moun-

tains, and lights were twinkling in the houses, that he re-saddled Kangaroot and rode slowly into Monterey.

Thurston did not catch sight of Mr. Bowers that night, nor did he attempt to. He learned, by casual inquiry as to what strangers were in town, that the man whom he sought was still there, and was satisfied for the present with this information.

The next day, by watching patiently from a window of the little adobe house in which he had found lodging, Thurston at last had the pleasure of seeing the gentleman of whom he was in search come swaggering down the street as though he owned the place. During the day Linn Halstead's partner discovered where Mr. Bowers was staying, and also gathered much information concerning him. It seemed that, short as had been his residence in Monterey, the man had managed to become pretty generally known, though under another name, and had quite overawed its quiet citizens by his bluster and swagger. Among them there was none of the rough-and-tumble element so common to the mining-camps; and, taking advantage of their more peaceful dispositions, Mr. Bowers had ventured to assume a decidedly arrogant, not to say bullying attitude toward his new acquaintances.

During the hour of siesta, when he knew Mr. Bowers was safely housed, Thurston visited the governor and alcalde, to both of whom he was known. To them he told his story, and unfolded a scheme that amused them and at the same time met with their favor, judging from the smiles with which they greeted his remarks and the readi-

ness with which they acceded to a request that he made of them. After telling them what he knew of Bowers, and relating his own and Halstead's experience with him, he merely asked to be allowed to deal with the rascal according to a plan that he outlined to them, without official interference. Armed with their permission to carry it out, he proceeded, as he expressed it, "to lay for that same Bowers."

It was again evening when he set out on his search. He had not gone far when he heard voices, raised in loud discussion, in the billiard-room of a half-restaurant, half-saloon, on the main street of the town, known as the "Fonda de la Union." As he reached the open doorway he was just in time to see and hear the very individual he was after. Mr. Bowers, who had evidently been drinking, stood in the middle of the room brandishing a heavy billiard-cue. With it he had just driven the other occupants of the place into one corner, where they stood regarding him with bewilderment not unmixed with fear. At that moment the central figure was shouting:

"I tell you, gentlemen, I'm a lightning bug from the cloudy mountains, and when I light, things has got to shine!"

"So they shall, Mr. Bowers; but perhaps you'd better light kinder easy," exclaimed a deep voice behind him. Whirling around, the bully found himself confronted by the black muzzle of a cocked revolver held in the steady hand of Thirsty Thurston.

"O Lord!" he gasped, as his face assumed an ashen

pallor, while his eyes rolled wildly and his knees shook so that his limbs barely supported him.

"Yes, Mr. Bowers," said the big miner, "I've no doubt he's here; but I don't reckon he's on your side just at this minute. So you'll please throw up your hands and get down on your knees. Quick!" he added, sternly. "She's loaded for varmint, and is mighty easy on the trigger."

Before he had finished, the trembling wretch was kneeling before him with uplifted hands.

"Now, Mr. Bowers, you'll please tell these gentlemen here that you're a blamed thief, and that you robbed me and my pard, which his name is Senator Halstead, of our pile of dust. And onless you have a hankering to head a funeral procession, you'll say it before I count five. One, two—"

"Yes, I am! I did!" screamed the man in an agony of fear; "but it's all here and I'll give it up."

"Very good, Mr. Bowers; of course you are, of course you did, and of course you will," said Thurston, with a grim smile. "Now, hold those hands straight up, and close together. So!"

Here the miner, producing a rawhide thong from his pocket, securely bound together Mr. Bowers's wrists with it. Then he searched his prisoner, and took from him a brace of pistols, an ugly-looking knife, and a bag of gold-dust. As he did this, he remarked to the assembled spectators, who now crowded the room:

"This here business is all correct, gentlemen. He's a galoot and a hoss thief, and I have authority from both

the governor and the alcalde to arrest him. If any one doubts my word let him ask them."

But nobody questioned his authority, nor would any of these victims of the bully's petty tyranny have raised a protest in his behalf, even had they known Thurston to be acting solely upon his own responsibility. They were enjoying the situation altogether too greatly for that, and they manifested their appreciation of its humor by laughter and shouts of derision called forth by Mr. Bowers's crestfallen attitude and ridiculous appearance.

When Thurston had completed his search for contraband articles, he asked: "Can any gentleman in the room lend me a lariat?"

It seemed as though every individual present must have had at least one of these ropes about his person, so readily were they proffered.

Selecting one of them, Thurston slipped its noose over his prisoner's head, and, drawing it closely about his neck, said:

"Now, Mr. Bowers, we'll move out of this, if you please, and when I say 'gee,' you'll gee, or when I say 'haw,' you'll haw; for, if you don't, you'll be apt to get choked."

"For God's sake don't hang me, Mr. Thurston! Don't let him hang me, gentlemen! I'll give back the dust—every grain of it! Indeed I will!" pleaded the terrified wretch, as, with his bound hands, he held the rough horsehair rope away from his throat.

But the crowd only jeered at him, and expressed a cheerful readiness to aid in the hanging, if so be such a

treat was in store for them. Thurston, however, quieted the man's immediate apprehensions by saying that he would not be hung so long as he behaved himself and did exactly as he was told. Then he drove Mr. Bowers before him, at the end of the lariat, to the lodgings occupied by that gentleman. Here he bade the crowd, who had followed them, a pleasant good-night, and informed Mr. Bowers that he had decided to take up his quarters there for the present.

During the two following days the sensation of Monterey was the sight of Thirsty Thurston, who had thus made himself a public benefactor, the relating of the story of Mr. Bowers's capture and novel treatment, and the indulging of speculation as to his ultimate fate.

In the mean time Thurston not only recovered nearly all the gold stolen by Messrs. Bowers, Hart, and Tedder from him and his partner in the Val d'Oro, but he effected a sale of the animals, formerly ridden by them, at a figure that made good what of it they had expended.

After Mr. Bowers had been kept a close prisoner for two days, without an inkling of what fate held in store for him by way of punishment for all his rascality, the boom of a gun out at sea announced the approach of the steamer from San Francisco. As a thick fog hung over the water answering guns were fired from the fort to direct her into the harbor.

On that steamer two passengers were securely locked into their staterooms, and had been ever since going aboard in San Francisco, the evening before. They were, of course, Wake-up Tedder and Asa Hart; and,

though neither of them yet knew of the other's presence on board, each knew that the key of his room was in Linn Halstead's pocket.

In San Francisco Asa Hart had first been taken to the steamer by both Halstead and Cæsar O'Reilly, while Tedder had been left locked in his room at the hotel. Then the doctor had returned for him, leaving Halstead to mount guard over Hart's door, which the prisoner had been assured would not be opened until the arrival of the steamer at Monterey.

After Tedder had been got safely aboard, Dr. O'Reilly bade Linn Halstead farewell, for he was about to return to his beloved mountains, happy in the recovered possession of his equally well-loved horse, Erin. As the great ship moved away from the wharf he shouted from it to Halstead, who leaned over the rail to catch the words:

"Good-by, lad! Aven if ye don't hear from me, write often. Me address is oncertain; but a letter directed almost anywhere will rache me sooner or later."

This was the last that Linn ever saw of the eccentric man; though in after years the occasional mention of the name of O'Reilly in connection with certain scientific discoveries gave assurance that he was still "doing quite well."

Guided by the sound of the friendly guns, the steamer made her way cautiously into the mist-shrouded harbor of Monterey. Of a sudden she ran out of the fog, as through an open doorway, and the glorious panorama of sunlit mountains, wooded hills, broad slopes, and the quaint houses of the town lay before them.

As she was only to stop here long enough to take aboard a few passengers and a bag or two of mail, small boats were already putting off from shore to the anchorage. In one of these, as they drew near, Halstead's anxious gaze detected his partner, and, sitting beside him, the proof that his undertaking had been successful. Mr. Bowers had been completely bewildered by being taken from the house that had been his prison for two days, and marched down to a boat instead of to the alcalde's court, as he had expected he would be. Thurston would answer none of his questions, and only said that he would find out soon enough what was to become of him. The steamer had just dropped anchor as they approached her, and Mr. Bowers thought perhaps she had just come up from Panama, and that he was to be taken to San Francisco for trial. He did not see Halstead, and when, after they had boarded the ship, Thurston conducted him to a seat at the extreme after end of the deck, and sternly bade him remain there until he was called for, the situation appeared to him stranger than ever.

In the mean time Halstead, having previously arranged with his partner for this very occasion, hurried below and unlocked the doors of both Hart's and Tedder's staterooms. He directed one of them to ascend to the port and the other to the starboard side of the deck, and to walk slowly aft, assuring each that by so doing he would meet with an interesting surprise. He then had barely time to get his own things into the small boat, where Thurston already awaited him, before the steamer's anchor was again lifted, and she began to move off.

As she swung round so that they could see her stern, they caught a momentary glimpse of three excited persons angrily shaking their fists in each other's faces on the upper deck. This interesting tableau only remained in view a few moments, but they saw enough to convince them that their scheme was a perfect success, and that no other punishment they could have devised would have equalled that which these three persons would bestow upon each other during the long journey on which they were just starting.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MAKING OF A STATE.

The Second *Somehow* is Realized.—The "Senators" are Received with Suitable Honors.—Mr. William Williams as Master of Ceremonies.—Eureka Camp Provides for Its Delegate.—The Convention.—Thurston Attends Strictly to Business.—He Makes a Notable Speech.—Signing the Constitution.—Thirty-one Guns.—Birth of the Golden State.

THE small boat in which the partners sat was allowed to remain stationary for some time as they watched the receding steamer, and speculated in regard to what was taking place between the three passengers whom they had placed on board of her. Then Halstead had to hear the story of Mr. Bowers's capture, over which he laughed heartily. He rejoiced over the recovery of the stolen treasure, though it was hard to believe that the second "somehow" of his resolution, made at the moment of leaving New York, had been realized, and he had really acquired a fortune in the land of gold. His reflections had the effect of sobering him, and he listened in silence as Thurston dilated enthusiastically upon the "Tower of 'Frisco," which in his mind had now become an assured reality.

At length the boatmen were ordered to row back to town. As the boat neared the beach her passengers wondered at the number of persons congregated upon it, and apparently waiting for them. The moment they

stepped ashore a most extraordinary band, composed of a cornet, a flute, two violins, and four guitars, broke forth with a wild medley of discordant sounds, evidently an original and unpractised composition, based upon the native fandango music of the country. At the same instant Mr. William Williams stepped forward, with a smiling face and important air, and, grasping Thurston's hand, shook it heartily, exclaiming, as he did so:

"Ah, Senator! How goes it? You came mighty near getting the bulge on us by coming down here so long ahead of time. We only got in this A.M. just as you went out to the ship; but we've rustled round, and humped ourselves, and I reckon you'll find things fixed up A 1 and satisfactory. You see, me and Ike here is a sort of a committee sent down by the boys to see that you was put through handsome and in a style that would do credit to the camp. And we're going to do it, you bet, if we have to break a whiffletree. This is a sort of a one-hoss band, but it's the best in these diggings, and whenever you wants 'em to travel round with you, all you've got to do is to say the word, and they're bound to toot as long as you kin stand it. Now, if you'll jest fall into line we'll march, kinder slow and dignified, up to the ranch where you're to hang out during the meeting of this here Congress."

Linn Halstead began a protest against such a ridiculous proceeding; but his partner, who highly appreciated the honor thus shown him, looked so grieved that he immediately changed his tone, and expressed the utmost willingness to form one of the triumphal procession that was

to escort the "Senator" from the Moquelumne to his official residence.

Preceded by the band, Thirsty Thurston walked arm-in-arm with Mr. William Williams, who was from that time forth known as "Colonel Williams," Chairman of the Reception Committee. Behind them came "Senator" Halstead and the other member of the committee, Mr. Isaac Thompson, who, from the black silk handkerchief that he invariably wore knotted loosely about his neck, was commonly known as "Nifty Ike." They were followed by a score or so of the citizens of Monterey, who, without knowing exactly why they did so, linked arms in couples, and marched solemnly along to the dirge-like music of the band. They felt that, while their presence added dignity to the proceeding, a certain importance must also attach to them as participants in it.

In this manner they moved slowly through the town, to a neatly whitewashed adobe house that, with its furniture, the committee had leased less than an hour before, giving its occupants a handsome consideration for moving out at once.

Short as was the time, a tall young pine-tree, stripped of its branches, had already been planted in front of this house; and, as the procession approached, a large American flag was hastily run to its top. At sight of this the band indulged in a prolonged and discordant wail, that sounded like cats, but which was intended as a salute, and the spectators raised a straggling cheer.

Over the front door of the house a board, on which, in

large letters, the word "Eureka" glistened in fresh paint, was supported by a miner's pick and shovel.

Pages might be written descriptive of the various tokens of respect and esteem that the committee from Eureka Camp showered upon their delegate, but a limited space forbids. Suffice it to say that their efforts were crowned with complete success, and were so fully appreciated, that upon their return to their grateful fellow-citizens, they were at once elected foreman and first assistant foreman of the fire company then being organized in Eureka Camp. This, as everybody knows, was the proudest distinction that could have been conferred upon them in those days.

In the house thus provided by the patriotism and liberality of his constituents, "Senator" Thurston resided in great comfort and state during the entire session of the convention. With him, and, of course, sharing all his honors, dwelt his partner, Linn Halstead, upon whom the other's insistence also finally conferred the title of "Senator."

The convention of which Thirsty Thurston was so proud to be a member, was a fine representative gathering of the Californians of that period. Among its prominent members were Dr. Robert Semple, of Sonoma, who served as its president; Captain William S. Marcy, its secretary; Captain John Sutter; General Vallejo; Antonio Pico, of San José; Miguel de Pedrorena, of San Diego; Don Abel Stearns, of Los Angeles; Pacificus Ord, of Monterey; Messrs. Gwin, Stewart, Halleck, Hill, Hastings, De la Guerra, Dominguez the Indian member, and a host of others, all leading men in their

respective districts. Colonel John C. Frémont was there, though not as a delegate, and the proceedings of the convention were reported by a man who, for years afterward, by his charming descriptive writings from all parts of the world, did more than any other one to spread, and cause to be respected, the title of Californian, Mr. J. Ross Browne.

These assembled in the spacious room formed by the upper story of Colton Hall, which was at that time the only building in all California adapted to the purpose, on September 1st, 1849; but a formal organization was not reached until the 4th. Between that date and October 13th, they drafted and adopted a constitution containing the best features of those in force in the Eastern States, defined the territorial limits of California, declared that slavery should never be one of its institutions, and conducted themselves with a dignity and wisdom that showed they were fully sensible of the momentous trust imposed upon them—the forming of a great, sovereign, and independent State.

In all the convention there was no more conscientious member than Delegate Thurston. He was always among the first to take his seat, and among the last to leave the hall when the day's business was concluded. He listened attentively to all the long debates, regardless of whether he understood their nature or not, and promptly voted yes or no upon each and every question, according to the innermost convictions of his honest nature. As he once remarked to Halstead, who generally occupied a spectator's seat in the hall:

"It's tedious at times, pard, I'm free to admit; but when the boys back there on the Moquelumne made a Senator out of Thirsty Thurston they did it because they reckoned he was an honest man, and would do 'em proud in this here Congress. Now, wouldn't I be worse 'n a galoot if I was to go back on 'em? Course I would, and if I can give 'em their money's worth by voting like I think they would vote if they was here, or getting down to the hard pan rights of what all these other ducks is chinning about, by listening, why I'll listen and vote till the cows come home, but what they shall have it."

The "Senator" never took part in a debate; for, as he said, "the other duck was always too well heeled for him to tackle," and he only made one speech. It was during the discussion of a design for the great seal of the new State; and though Thurston had but a vague idea of the form or use of such a piece of public property, he realized that it was a sort of a picture that was to be everywhere typical of the State he was helping form, and the subject appealed strongly to his imagination. He carefully studied the several designs submitted to the convention, some of which were ludicrous enough, and finally became the ardent champion of the one drawn by Major Garnett and presented by Caleb Lyon, of Lyonsdale, which was eventually adopted, and remains in use to this day.

In this design the principal figure was Minerva, with a grizzly bear crouching at her feet. It also bore a wheat sheaf, and a vine, a miner with his implements, the great bay of San Francisco with its Golden Gate, and the

Sierras rising in the distance beyond it. Crowning the whole, in letters of gold, was the single word "Eureka."

This was what captured Thurston's fancy and won his heart, and it was this word that moved him to rise and address the convention as "Mister President and fellow Congressmen, likewise Senators—"

"The member from Eureka has the floor," here interrupted the chairman.

"That's the word, pard!" eagerly broke in Thurston, who had wondered what he was to say next. "Eureka it is! And it's the name of the very bulliest little old mining-camp that ever was hatched. There ain't nothing in the mountains of all Californy can hold a tin lantern to it for sand and rustle, or for regular git up and git, ante and pass the buck enterprise. Now, Mister President, I'll allow I ain't much on state-making, never having followed the trade regular, and I haven't yet tumbled to the racket of great seals. However, seeing as it is considered the correct thing for a State to have a great seal, why this bully old State of ours has got to have one of course, likewise everything else that any other State has got, if it bursts the bank to get it. In which case I leave it to you and to my fellow Senators if that seal hadn't ought to be pictured out and stamped with the name of the niftiest, most gilt-edged, high-toned, all wool, buttered on both sides, and generally open-eyed mining-camp between the Colorado and the Pacific, which the same is labelled Eureka Camp, and is in the centre of the district for which I have the honor to blow a horn down here."

As the "Senator" sat down, perspiring and confused, after this the greatest effort of his life, cheer after cheer broke from the assembly; for his speech was by far the most original and genuinely enthusiastic of the sitting. The president was obliged to rap violently on his desk for some time before quiet and order were restored. When that was done a thin, dyspeptic-looking member, who was the avowed champion of another design for a seal, arose, and began, very sarcastically, to say:

"Does my esteemed and learned contemporary, who has just taken his seat, really imagine that in the tawdry and meretricious design favored by him for the great seal of our glorious State, the *Io triumphe* of Archimedes, proposed for its motto, has reference to any insignificant little mining—"

Here the speaker's quavering voice was drowned by a storm of hisses, cheers, and conflicting shouts, amid which the cry of "Question! Question!" was the only one distinctly heard.

In order to quiet the tumult the chair was finally obliged to call for a vote upon the question, and it resulted in the almost unanimous adoption of Caleb Lyon's design.

Then "Senator" Thurston again rose to his feet and thanked the members for their cordial support of his views, by remarking, "Gentlemen, you do me proud, and I likewise looks toward you." He also seconded the motion already made that $1000 be appropriated for having this design of the great seal engraved, and as he sat down, it was carried by acclamation.

Directly after this the convention adjourned for the day, and Linn Halstead, who had been an interested and amused spectator of this incident in his partner's political career, found the opportunity of grasping the honest fellow's hand and offering his hearty congratulations. "It was perfectly immense, Thirsty!" he exclaimed, "and they'll make you Governor of the State for it yet, see if they don't!"

"Well, pard," answered Thurston, complacently, and for the first time in his life a little boastfully, "I never would have thought it was in us; but it does begin to look like we was kinder naturally cut out for Senators, after all, don't it?"

Within an hour from that time Colonel William Williams, mounted on Kangaroot the mustang, was speeding away over the foot-hills and the warm Salinas plains, bearing the great news to Eureka Camp on the distant Moquelumne. There it was received with such demonstrations of public joy as had never before been witnessed in the diggings; and, from that day forward, the name of Thirsty Thurston was synonymous with all that was great, good, and wise in politics. Alas! that that camp, which, had it survived the decline of placer mining, might have erected a monument in the "Senator's" honor, should have faded from existence. Not only is its site unknown, but its very name, transferred to another locality, may now be found far to the northward in Nevada County.

So the business of the convention was carried on, smoothly or stormily according to its members' unanimity

or diversity of opinion, until finally its labors were brought to a close.

On October 13th the delegates assembled for the last time to perform their last solemn duty, the signing of the constitution they had adopted. The day was one of the most perfect of the season. The sun shone from an unclouded sky, and a fresh breeze, that crisped the blue waters of the bay, blew in at the open windows of the hall, with pleasant rustlings among its draping of banners. The streets of the old town wore a festive appearance, the great hall was crowded by the delegates and their friends, and every face was smiling and expectant.

Shortly before noon the ceremony was begun, and as President Semple affixed his signature to the great parchment-roll, a signal was waved from the balcony. Instantly the Stars and Stripes sprang to the masthead of the tall pole in front of the Government buildings, and the deep boom of one of Captain Burton's heavy guns rang out from the fort. It was echoed and re-echoed from the foot-hills, the Toro Mountains, and the more distant ranges, as though the grim peaks were speeding on the great news and telling it one to another. As the signing progressed so the guns thundered forth their salutes, one for each State in the Union. Twenty-eight—twenty-nine—thirty, were followed by a momentary, breathless pause of expectation. Then it rolled out in the clear, autumn air, the glad roar of the thirty-first gun, and with it came a great cry of "That's for California! The thirty-first State!"

At the sound Captain Sutter sprang to his feet, and, with tears of joy streaming down his face, cried, as he waved his hat above his head :

" Gentlemen, this is the happiest day of my life ! Let us give three cheers for the great State of California !"

They were given with a royal will ; and, above all others, could be heard the proud ringing tones of Thirsty Thurston's powerful voice. The sound was caught up and carried through the town to the water's edge, and thence out to the ships at anchor. From them it came back, and was repeated over and over again, while men shook hands and embraced each other in their glad rejoicings over the birth of the Golden State.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PARTNERS TO THE LAST.

The Great Convention Ball.—Linn Becomes Interested.—A Long-Remembered Voice.—Who is She?—Don Almiro Greets his Friends.—Señorita Pelamo.—The "Senators" Accept a Pleasant Invitation.—El Hacienda de la Soledad.—A Family Gathering.—John Pelham, of Vermont.—Forty Years Later.

As Linn Halstead and Thirsty Thurston stood on the balcony of the convention hall, witnessing and sharing in the rejoicing with which the birth of the new State was hailed, there stood with them a distinguished-looking elderly gentleman and the most beautiful girl, seen in Monterey that day. To these the two men showed every possible attention, and it was evident that their presence added very greatly to the pleasure of the occasion.

The evening before had been selected by the members of the convention as the date of the grand ball they were to give in return for an entertainment already given them by the citizens of Monterey, as well as for the private hospitalities extended by the military officers of the post, by Doña Augusta Ximeno, Don Pablo de la Guerra, and by Señors Soveranez and Abrego.

The great hall was cleared of its furniture, draped with flags, banners, and masses of evergreen from the surrounding forest, and brilliantly lighted by three hastily-improvised, but most effective chandeliers. At eight

o'clock the guests began to arrive, and within an hour the hall was filled with the most notable assemblage that the California of those days could produce. Governor Riley was there in his general's uniform, and wearing the broad sash of yellow silk won by gallantry on the field of Contreras. With him was a brilliant staff composed of all the army officers then stationed at Monterey. Colonel Frémont, the "Pathfinder," was there with his family. General Vallejo was there, and near him might be seen the soldierly figure of Captain Sutter, with his brave blue eyes and gray mustache. There were Spanish dons and Mexican señors in picturesque dress. With them were dark-eyed doñas, señoras, and señoritas, from far-away San Diego and Los Angeles, from Santa Barbara and Monterey, and from many of the great inland haciendas that occupied the fertile valleys of the south.

The music was furnished by "Senator" Thurston's band; and though their repertory contained but three pieces, which they played over and over in unvarying order, and without regard to the nature of the dance in progress, they rendered these with a spirit and vim that went far toward making up for other deficiencies. As an inspiration to dancing the music was a decided success. Everybody danced. Even Thirsty Thurston, who had no more knowledge of dancing than he had of speech-making, danced, not only with his feet, but with his whole heart and soul. His motto had always been "Do your level best in everything you undertake, and you'll come out all right." This had held good in the case of his great speech, and it did him good service now. His

hearty and thorough enjoyment of the whole affair, and especially of his own mistakes in dancing, was so infectious, that it bid fair, before the night was over, to make him the most popular man in the room, especially with the ladies.

Linn Halstead also danced, but not so indefatigably as his partner; for, being younger, he was more sensitive to his own deficiencies, or rather to his ignorance of local customs. Also, being young, and having been for a long time deprived of ladies' society, he found it pleasant to sit and talk with his fair partners on the dim, cool balcony that opened from one side of the hall.

On one of these occasions, while engaged in merry conversation with a mischievous black-eyed señorita who spoke English quite well, he was startled into silence by the sound of a voice. It proceeded from a laughing group that had just stepped from the ball-room and now stood near him. The voice was his mother's, or its counterpart, and it thrilled the young man as no other on earth could have done.

"Who is it?" he asked of his companion.

"Who?"

"The one who spoke just now among those people standing there. You must know them. Whose voice was it?"

"Ah! you mean the General Rodriguez, or the Señor Gavilan, or perhaps the Don ——"

"No, no! It was not a man. I mean the young lady."

"Oh! It is doubtless the Señorita Pelamo, daughter of the Don Pelamo of the great hacienda de la Soledad, who

has charmed you. It is no wonder, for she is very beautiful, and very accomplished, and very wealthy. She is here to-night with her grandpapa. They came late. I saw them enter the room but a few minutes ago. Do you, then, have acquaintance with her?"

"No," replied Linn. "I never even heard her name before; but her voice reminded me so of another, that it startled me."

At this moment his companion was claimed for a waltz, and the young man was at liberty to follow the merry group to which his attention had been directed, and which had just re-entered the ball-room.

Again he heard the voice, and this time its owner stood fully revealed in the light of a chandelier. He had never seen any one so lovely. She was young; a sparkling brunette, and elegantly dressed after the manner of the wealthy Spanish ladies of that day. And yet there was a certain indescribable air about her that was more American than Spanish. Her face was familiar. He had certainly seen it before; but where? For a moment the young man was completely at fault. Still, he had not seen so many ladies since leaving New York but that he ought to remember.

All at once it flashed across his mind. The steamer coming up from Panama. San Blas, and the two passengers who came on board there. One of them was this girl with the voice; a girl no longer, but a young lady evidently accustomed to society and to the universal admiration she was now receiving. Where was Thurston? He must be told of this wonderful discovery.

Linn found his partner mopping his face and recovering from the violent exertions of his last dance. He was interested to hear that their fair fellow-passenger was in the room, and even asked to have her pointed out.

"There she is," cried Linn. "Don't you see? She is standing beside that handsome old gentleman with the long gray mustache. I suppose he is her grandfather."

Before the last word was spoken Thurston was on his feet, and ejaculating, "Snakes and grizzlies!" had started on a bee-line through the whirling dancers for the opposite side of the room. Without regard to the confusion he was causing, or the black looks cast after him, he strode straight forward and up to the gentleman Halstead had just pointed out to him.

To Linn's astonishment he saw his partner lay his hand familiarly upon the shoulder of the dignified-looking stranger, and to his further amazement the other turned, uttered an exclamation of pleasure that reached even to where he stood, seized Thurston's hand and shook it heartily. An introduction to the young lady followed, and she seemed as delighted to meet the miner as the gentleman had been.

It was most unaccountable. Who could these people be whom Thurston seemed to know so well, and who evidently experienced great pleasure in meeting him?

As Halstead stood puzzling over this question he became aware that his partner was beckoning eagerly to him to come and join them. He did so; and, reaching the group, was introduced by Thurston as "My pardner, Senator Halstead. Pard, this is Don José Almiro, the

señor I've told you about who fixed us up with the map of the Val d'Oro, and this lady is his granddaughter, the Señorita Pelamo."

"I have ze large pleasure to make your acquaint, sir!" exclaimed the old gentleman, extending his hand to Halstead, with a courtly bow. "Ze fren of my fren Thurston mus also be my fren. Niñita, will you not shake ze han of ze Don Halstead?"

"Of course I will, grandpapa," answered the young lady in excellent English, and smiling brightly. Then to Linn she said, as she cordially held out her hand: "I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Halstead. We would have been friends long ago, I am sure, if I had only known that Mr. Thurston, to whom our family owes such a debt of gratitude, and you were on the steamer that brought me up from San Blas. I was only a girl then, and on my way home from the convent school of Tepic."

Although the señorita's card was already filled for all the regular dances, Linn managed to engage her for several "extras" before the ball closed, and when it was all over he knew that he had never enjoyed an evening so thoroughly in his life.

There was no more dancing for Thurston though, for he and Don Almiro had not said half they wished to each other before the exhausted musicians began to put up their instruments, and the great convention ball came to an end.

Before separating that night, or rather morning, they not only made arrangements to meet the next day, but Don Almiro had extracted a promise from both the gentle-

men to accompany him and his granddaughter to the Soledad hacienda near the old mission of that name, and there make a long visit.

"It is zere you will see my son, ze Don Pelamo," he said, with such a tone of pride as left no doubt regarding the relations existing between this father and son-in-law.

They started on the morning following the day on which the constitution was signed, and the partners, mounted on Fanita and Kangaroot, which knowing animal had been returned to Monterey a few days before, rode on either side of the light wagon in which the Don and the Señorita made the journey. They went by way of the Carmel Mission, where they stopped for awhile to visit the tomb of Padre Junipero Serra, the zealous founder of these establishments in California.

Then they wound their slow way back from the coast, through the desolate sand-hills, and, on their farther side, descended to the broad brown plains of the Salinas. Up the level valley they swept at full speed for hours, until finally the glorious ride was ended in the open court of the great hacienda.

The first person to meet them was Don Pelamo; and, as his daughter sprang into his arms, she threw hers about his neck, exclaiming: "Oh, papa, I've had such a beautiful time! And we've brought home such a splendid surprise for you! It's Señor Thurston, the brave man who saved grandpapa from those horrid Yankees."

"Not horrid, Niñita; remember we are all Yankees now."

"Not I, papa."

"I am afraid even you will have to be called one," laughed her father, as, after helping Don Almiro respectfully from the wagon, he turned to greet the guests. At sight of Halstead he started and changed color slightly, and upon being introduced held his hand long as he gazed steadily into the young man's face. As Linn was beginning to feel embarrassed, the other said, slowly:

"Halstead, Halstead. You can't possibly be a son of the Reverend Augustus Halstead."

"Perhaps I can't," answered Linn, smiling, "but I am. Why, did you know my father, sir?"

"No, I never knew him; but I believe that I was your mother's only brother, and that I am your uncle, John Pelham."

"John Pelham!" cried Linn, in amazement. "Why, I thought your name was Don Pelamo."

"So it is in Spanish," replied the other, "but in English it is plain John Pelham, and if you are a son of Mary Pelham, of Northbrook, Vermont, you are my own nephew."

To at least two of the "Senators" from Monterey, the rejoicings held over the founding of the State of California the day before were as nothing compared with the great joy in the household of the Soledad hacienda that night. Don Pelamo had found a nephew, the señorita a cousin, and Linn Halstead, who had supposed himself to be a homeless wanderer, without a relative in the world, had found both an uncle and a cousin.

"And so have I," cried Thirsty Thurston; "for you know, pard, we are pardners in everything."

* * * * * * *

Forty years have passed since those golden days of '49; but their memory is still tenderly and lovingly cherished in the hacienda of Soledad, on the broad Salinas plains. Its present master, known and respected far and wide as Judge Halstead, is no other than our old friend Linn; and its gracious mistress, his wife, is also his cousin, Dolores Pelham Halstead. During a part of each year they occupy one of the handsomest houses in San Francisco, grown from a city of tents to be a city of palaces. It stands on two lots of land in what is now the most fashionable residence portion of the city; but which was formerly a wild patch of chaparral, far beyond the wildest dreams of the city limits, and owned by a man named Jenkins. They and their intimate friends know their stately mansion as the "Tower of 'Frisco," for it was built by Thirsty Thurston, though not until long after he had dug its foundations, together with those of his enormous fortune, in the Golden Valley of the Sierras.

For many years a flock of young Halsteads called him "Partner." They were his "little pards," and their greatest joy lay in listening to his stories of the Val d'Oro and the days of '49.

A few years since he left them, and peacefully passed away. He died with a loving hand clasped tightly in both of his; and, with his latest breath, he whispered, faintly:

"Pard, do you reckon they'll let an old miner like me stake out a claim in the diggings where I'm bound?"

"I know they will, Thirsty," answered Linn Halstead, bending tenderly over his dying partner. "I know they will. Your claim is already staked out and waiting for you. It is recorded in your name, and no man can take it from you."

Then the dear, honest face was lighted with a smile of great joy. His eyes shone with the glory of the city which is of "pure gold like unto clear glass," and, with a sigh of content, he passed from the days of Time to the Golden Days of Eternity.

THE END.